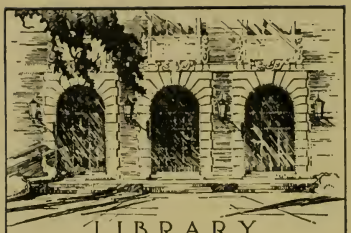

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MEMOIRS AND RESOLUTIONS

OF

ADAM GRAEME,

OF MOSSGRAY.

INCLUDING SOME CHRONICLES OF THE BOROUGH OF FENDIE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND,"
"MERKLAND," AND "CALEB FIELD."

Second Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
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1852.

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BOOK III.

CHANGE.

(*Continued*).

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ADAM GRAEME

OF

MOSSGRAY.

CHAPTER II.

Close by the sunshine is the cloud;
And yonder o'er the hills, the shadows pass
Like breath; across this field they flit, they hover—
And now 'tis bright, and now 'tis dim, and now
There's not a cloud in heaven. Look up again;
Lo! all the sky is veiled, the sun shut out—
There's nothing here but sadness.

ANONYMOUS.

Mrs. Buchanan was in high spirits. The friendship of Lilias, and the honour

ntended for her by the Reverend Robert Insches, had opened a new life to Helen. She was no more the neglected and solitary schoolmistress. The young lady of Mossgray was a frequent visitor at their humble house. Mrs. Whyte of Kirkmay had called to make a definite beginning of their friendship—the plaintive Mrs. Gray became a regular visitor. Mr. Insches took every possible opportunity of stealing into William Oswald's vacant corner in the quiet parlour. It pleased the good mother "to see her bairn, respected like the lave."

And the change was also very pleasant to Helen. She had been at Kirkmay, and much enjoyed the hospitalities of the Manse—she saw Lilias frequently; and even the handsome head of the Reverend Robert was an agreeable variety, breaking the blank of dim the wall, which for whole years of past

evenings had been the only thing she had to look across to. She was still much alone; but the much was not always, and the monotony thus occasionally broken became monotony no longer. The firmament of their quiet life was brightened; it was a pleasant change.

But other changes were progressing; as the spring grew into summer some shadow fell upon Lilias Maxwell. No one knew what it was, nor how produced, but the old paleness returned to her cheek, and the old sinking to her heart. There was no external sign of sorrow or suffering. The change fell upon her like a cloud—such a cloud as does sometimes glide across the sun in the early glory of his shining. She was very calm, very quiet, very thoughtful, but in moments when she fancied no one saw her, her fingers sought each other

painfully, and were clasped together, as hands are clasped only in grief or in prayer. But the cause of this she told to no one; and even to her guardian's affectionate inquiries, she only answered, "It is nothing, Mossgray; indeed it is nothing."

Very early on a bright May day, Lilias went hastily up along the banks of the wan water, to the house of Murrayshaugh. She had been up that morning earlier than even the wakeful Janet Mense, as if she could not rest; and now she had stolen forth, avoiding any company. She walked more quickly than was usual to her, and over the face, which still wore its look of constitutional calmness, shades of unwonted colour were wavering to and fro; for the Lily of Mossgray was sick at heart—sick with the fever of anxiety—the hope and the fear.

She had become a frequent visitor of

Isabell Brown; the old woman was fretfully kind to Lilias; and when the days were warm enough to permit her to receive those calls in Miss Lucy's parlour, Isabell was very communicative, and told tales of the Murrays, their old grandeur and their present exile with much satisfaction to herself. Lilias meanwhile sat on one of the faded high-backed chairs, opposite the the wall on which hung the portrait, and listened pleasantly. Isabell took the young lady of Mossgray's admiration of the picture as a personal compliment to herself, and there began to spring up a genuine liking for her in the breast of the little sharp old woman; she almost thought Lilias worthy to take rank next to Miss Lucy.

On this particular day Isabell's dissertation began as usual.

"Ye see, I canna tell what gars Murray-

shaugh stay away in thae foreign pairts, and him has a guid house o' his ain to bide in; but there's nae accounting for folk's tastes. For my ain pairt, I wadna gie Murrayshaugh just where ye're sitting this minute, for a king's palace; but he's an awfu' proud man, Murrayshaugh, and nae doubt he has a guid richt."

Lilias made some indistinct response; it did not much matter what it was, for Isabell desired a good listener more than anything else.

"It's maist folk's pride to be thought rich," continued the little old housekeeper with some ostentation; "but Murrayshaugh's a man far frae the common; it's his notion to hae the house bare, like as he was puir. It's naething but folk's fancy—ane likes ae thing, and ane anither. I wadna wonder noo but ye've heard that the Murrays were

gaun doun the brae? there's aye some havers rattling at the heels o' a gentleman's ain fancy; as if it was needcessity, when it's naething but his pleasure."

Lilias involuntarily glanced round the faded bare room; its look of decayed gentility made a dreary comment on the assumption of the old adherent of the ruined family; but her eye rested again, where it rested so often, on the portrait, and she sighed and did not answer.

"You're no weel the day;" said Isabell sympathetically, "and yet its bonnie cheerie weather that should be guid for young folk. Eh Miss Maxwell! ane wad think ye kent that picture, ye tak sic weary looks at it; but ye wad never see onybody like that?"

"I think I have," said Lilias with a faint smile.

"Like the auld picture that was like Mr.

Hew? tell us where. It bid to be himsel; there's only the twa o' them in the world, and wha should hae the kindly face but their ainsels? I'm saying tell me where ye saw him—for charity tell me where!"

"It was not Mr. Murray, Isabell," said Lilias; "it was a friend—a person I knew in England."

"And he was like that!" said Isabell. "do ye think I dinna ken that nae fremd man could be like that? will you tell me what they ca'ed him? Ye'll read in books whiles, o' gentles for their ain pleasure taking anither name—it bid to be Mr. Hew."

"His name was Grant," said Lilias, "he was not Mr. Hew; he was a young man—quite young."

"And what should he be else but young?" said the little old woman pattering up and down with her short, unequal, agitated steps.

"div ye think he's withered and auld like me? I tell ye he's the gallantest lad ye ever set your e'e upon; ye may ca' that like him, but it's naething till him—the spark that was in his bonnie e'en, and his brent broo—as if I didna mind! If he was far blythe and lightsomer like than that, and yet had a face that could be wae when need was, for ither folk afore himsel; and if he had a presence o' his ain that gar't ye bow, and a smile that made yefain; then I say it was Mr. Hew ye saw, and nae ither living man!"

There was some wonderful power in the old woman's words. The sad pale head of Lilias slowly followed her motions, as if by some magnetic attraction. She did not speak; but as Isabell ceased, she closed her eyelids painfully, perhaps the better to see

again the person thus truthfully described—perhaps to shut in the tears.

The housekeeper pattered up and down for a while in silence; at length she stopped short, immediately before Lilias, and repeated with emphasis:

"I'm telling ye it was Mr. Hew."

"It was not Mr. Hew, Isabell," said Lilias gently, as she rose to go away. "It was one whose home is very far from this; who came from the northern islands far away; and it is a mere fancy of mine that he is like the portrait. He was not Mr. Hew."

Isabell was not satisfied—she accompanied her visitor to the door with many mutterings; the "kindly face" could belong only to a Murray, "it bid to be Mr. Hew."

Lilias turned away across the unsafe

bridge, and went hastily up a steep lane which led to the Fendie high-road; she was not going home, and excited and anxious as she was, she could not bear the meditative calm of the waterside.

It was a somewhat long walk, and Lilias was not like herself; her feverish hasty pace, and the painful flushes of colour which now and then crossed her brow, were unnatural. It was the first time she had been tried by this trial—the deadly anxiety with which we shiver and burn, when our sole hope is in peril, and there comes to us no tidings. She thought she could endure to hear of any certain calamity, but that blank of suspense was terrible to her—she could not bear it.

There had been mail after mail from the far East, but no letter for Lilias; and this was the day again. She had gone to

Murrayshaugh to fill up the feverish blank of those slow moments; to look once more upon the face which never perhaps she should look upon with faith and trust again; and now she was hurrying to the decision of all those tremulous doubts and fears; if there was a letter to-day—and if there was none—

Her lips were parched—they would hardly meet to ask that question—"No." Lilias looked into the postmaster's face wistfully again; she would not hear the denial. "No, there were no letters for Miss Maxwell."

And immediately there fell upon her a dead calm; a dull slow pain of quietness. She went out in her noiseless way, and glided down the street like a shadow; her heart was sick—she could have seated herself by the roadside, and wept out the slow tears that were gathering under her

eyelids, unconscious of any passers-by; but those who did pass by saw only the grave, pale, pensive Lily of Mossgray. The fever was over—there remained no present hope to distract her now, and she was calm again.

And then she began to think, and laboured bravely to put away from her those doubts and fears—but Lilias had not the impulsive energy of hope; the elastic life, which can fight and wrestle with sorrow at its strongest, was not in her; but she could do what the more buoyant could not have done—she could wait—and knowing the time that she must wait, she became calm.

She had intended going home, but as the shock softened, she changed her purpose. She went to borrow hope from Helen Buchanan, in one of those sudden yearnings for gentle company, with which sad hearts

are sometimes seized. In her hush and faintness she wanted to have some living thing come in between her, and her secret pain—she wanted to forget herself.

It was a holiday with Helen, and she was in a holiday mood, withstanding, with her natural enthusiasm, the gloomy dogmas of Mrs. Gray who was making a gracious call upon Mrs. Buchanan. Mrs. Buchanan did not much like the melancholy lady; her sanguine gentle temper recoiled from the sombre atmosphere which suited Mrs. Gray; but she was Mrs. Whyte's sister, and a "very respectable" acquaintance for Helen; so the good mother submitted pleasantly.

"Are you ill, Lilias," said Helen.

"No, Helen, it is nothing," answered Lilias gently. It was her universal answer; the melancholy cloud was indeed very visible, but she would not speak of the cause.

"My dear," said Mrs. Gray—she was very affectionate this good doleful woman—her very gloom increased her tenderness; "I am very much afraid you are not taking sufficient care of yourself. I am sure you got damp feet that day you were at the Manse, and Elizabeth would never think of asking you to change them. Elizabeth is really very careless about damp feet; she never heeds them herself—and I have known many a one get a consumption with them. You are looking very white, my dear; you must really take care."

"I am quite well, Mrs. Gray," said Lilias, "perfectly well, I assure you."

Mrs. Gray shook her head.

"Really, my dear, people never know. We are well to-day, and ill to-morrow: it is a strange world."

The proposition in this case being very abstract no one controverted it.

"When I see," continued Mrs. Gray oratorically, "young people going out on the world with such false notions as most of them have, poor things, it grieves me, Mrs. Buchanan. So little as there is to enjoy after all, even if they get all they expect."

Mrs. Buchanan like Mr. Oswald, had an old-fashioned prejudice that there was something orthodox in all this; a prejudice which made her diffident of answering.

"Poor things!" she echoed with a slight falter; "but after all, Mrs. Gray, we had light hearts in our own youth, and why should we discourage them? Sorrow aye comes soon enough."

A sigh from Lilias sounded like an assent: and the Lily of Mossgray indeed bent her

weary head and assented. She began to believe that sorrow—nothing but sorrow—was the common lot.

But Helen's face was flushing—her small head growing erect. Mrs. Gray turned round—she was no coward—to face her vowed antagonist.

"Miss Buchanan, my dear, I am speaking the truth. People say that the happiest part of life is youth; now, just look at yourself. Toiling and labouring with these children; wearied with them every night, but just having to begin again every morning; with little time to yourself—to visit your friends, or read, or whatever you might choose. My dear, just look at it yourself. What have you to enjoy?"

Helen started.

"I have all the world—not this little humble house—not that school-room only;

but the earth, and the sky, and the sea! Look at them—look at what God gives us—the sunshine and the clouds—the hills and the rivers—and you ask me what I have to enjoy? I have all the world! the weariness and the rest, the labour and the sleep, the night and the day, they are all given us, waiting our pleasure like the spirits of the old dreams. There is no one born into the earth who is not born rich, richer than kings, for we have all the world."

Mrs. Gray was not prepared to answer this; she turned away to look from the window at the flowers, and prudently shook her head, half at the wild doctrine, and half at the eager manner; but she tilted no more at that time with Helen.

"Will you walk up with me to Mossgray, Helen?" said Lilias, in the subdued melancholy voice which made the petition more

urgent than a command; and Helen consented at once. As they descended the steps at the bridge, and waded through the long, thick grass, which spread between the backs of the Fendie houses and the river, the pensive calm of Lilias touched the variable spirit of her friend. They began to talk in that tone of half-playful sadness which often veils over griefs which the speakers would not tell. It is the mood of speculation; and they were neither of them too old for the girlish dreamy fancies, half-superstitious which belong to our imaginative years.

"I wonder," said Lilias, "whether our minds are formed, Helen, to suit our fate? I mean that our griefs are made for us, like our dwellings, with an individual fitness in them all. It seems so strange sometimes, as if on one person had fallen the fate which

properly belonged to another; yet it must be that we are suited always—our minds with our trials."

"It must be," said the bolder Helen, "for what would be joy to one is nothing to another, Lilias. I think I could fancy what my troubles would be, and yours?"

"Tell me, Helen."

"Calm, grave, quiet sorrows, which will not have the fever of doubt and hope in them, which you will know certainly, and be able to weep silent tears for. Lilias, I think these will be yours; and for me—I do not know—I think strong troubles that I can fight and battle with; unquiet, living griefs that will keep me strained and labouring. Lilias, it is not my foolish fancies that make you sad?"

"No. I do not see the sun just now,

that is all," said the pale, calm Lilias, shutting the eyes which were again full. "Helen, Helen, let us not say any more."

CHAPTER III.

"Concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Preyed on her damask cheek."

TWELFTH NIGHT.

THE good Mossgray was pained for the dimness which hung about his adopted child. It was not positive sorrow—it was only a shadowy quietness as of a cloud, and very still and patient was Lilias. She was trying to live in the present only, because the future, when she tried to look upon it, made her heart sick; but it is not in the nature of

humanity to do this, and her effort to confine herself to those individual hours, as one by one in their quietness they glided past her, made her only languidly indifferent to them all. For Lilias was alone: the hope in peril was her sole hope; kindly ties of kindred there were none for her, and except the old man, her guardian, to whom she looked with tenderness and reverence as to a father, but who yet was not her father, nor had part in all the associations of the past as members of one family have, she had none in the world but this one—and he!—

Where was he? was it peril or illness, or, painfullest of all, was it change, which produced this agony of silence? She tried to interdict herself from the constant speculation to which she could give no answer, but the yearning wonder and anxiety were

too strong for the sorrowful heart; yet she said nothing. She could not blame him; she could not have another fancy that on his truth there lay the faintest suspicion; and with that haze of mild, subdued patience about her, she waited, and when she did think of the future time at all, thought of what lay beyond that fated, solemn day, on which tidings might and surely *must* come, as of some dreamy, unknown chaos strange and chill, another life.

"I dinna ken what's come to Miss Lillie," said Mrs. Mense, with a sigh.

"She's ower muckle made o', that's it," responded the sourer Janet.

"Woman, woman!" said the housekeeper, bitterly, "have ye nae memory o' being ance young yoursel', and maybe having troubles in your ain heart that wadna bear telling? but I needna speak to you."

"Na, I reckon no," said Janet. "Me! I wad just like to hear onybody say that I ever had a trouble a' my born days that mightna hae been visible to the haill world if it likit."

"And that just shows how little ye ken about it," said Mrs. Mense; "if ye ever had a heart ava, it maun hae grown to bane twenty year ago. Are ye gaun to iron thae bits o' laces for the young lady or are ye no'?—for if ye're no', I'll do't mysel'—"

"The young lady—set her up!" said the housekeeper, *de facto*. "Muckle right she has to the auld Lady Mossgray's guid lace. He'll be gieing her the land next; there's nae fuils like auld fuils."

"Janet Mense," said the old woman, "ye hae eaten the Laird's bread mony a year, and I hae suffered ye in the house, for a' your ill tongue, and for a' sae little worth as

ye are; but if ye daur to say anither word against Mr. Adam, I'll take ye by the shouthers and put ye forth from this door. I'll do it with my ain hands; sae ye ken."

Janet judged it prudent to sound a retreat. She began to spread the lace upon the table, preparatory to the process of ironing.

"The wife's in a creel," said Robbie Carlyle the fisherman, entering with his basket of flounders, thinly covered with a few grilse. "Wha's she gaun to pit to the door? If it's Effie, I'll hae nae mair dealings wi' ye, Mrs. Mense; for Effie's Jamie Caryl's daughter, and Jamie's my second cousin; sae we'll be to 'gree again."

"And wha'll tire sunest o' that, Robbie, my man?" said the housekeeper.

"Faith, I dinna ken," said the bold fisherman, "there's waur folk nor me, guid-

wife; and if I missed your custom, ye wad miss my ca', ye ken; for I'm guid company—especially when I bring the cuddie."

"I would like to ken, Robbie Caryl," said Janet, "what the like o' you has to do wi' a cuddie."

"The like o' me! Ye're a sensible woman, Jen, but ye dinna ken a'thing; it's no to be expected. I ken few that does, by mysel', and Mossgray, and the minister; the like o' me! as if I wasna as 'sponsible a man as there is in the parish, and as weel entitled to hae ease to my shouthers! There's thristles and dockens enow aboon tidemark to mainteen a dizzen cuddies, and he taks nae cleeding, puir beast; he's cheaper than a wean."

"Eh, Robbie!" said Mrs. Mense reproachfully, "to even the bits of innocent bairns to a brute beast!"

"He's a very decent beast," said Robbie. "I hae kent mony a waur Christian. The bairns! I hae half a dizzen curly pows o' them, ilk ane a greater sorrow than the tither, and I can tell ye it's Blackie out there that has the maist cause to compleen o' being evened to them. He's a decent, sober 'sponsible beast, like my ain sel', and the little anes are even-down spirits, never out o' mischief, if it binna when they're tumbled in a dub; and then ane has the fash o' fishing them out again."

"It maun be awfu' dangerous for bairns, that weary marsh," said Mrs. Mense, sympathetically.

"Hout, we never fash our heads about it," said the fisherman; "they're a' born to plouter amang saut water: it comes natural; when they do get a fa', the auldest anes can scramble out again, and there's nane

o' them ower young to skirl. The wife whiles makes a fyke about it, but nane o' them 'll drown. You might maist say they were born in the sea; onyway, the tide was up on the very doorstane the nicht Sandy was born. It was an uncommon high tide; and the weans hae a story that he came in on the tap o' a muckle wave. Little Mary wad maist swear she saw the bit wee beld pow o' him in amang the foam; and the foam's nane o' the clearest, I can tell ye, when the Firth's in a roar."

"Wasna Monday nicht uncommon coarse doun-bye?" said Janet. "Did ye hear if there was ony skaith dune, Robbie?"

"Hout, woman, do ye ca' *yon* coarse?" answered the salt-water man. "Skaith! no, if it werena that auld careless body Willie Tamson that brought in his heavy

brute o' a boat ower the nets, and had nigh coupit her, forbye driving I kenna how mony stakes out of the shore, and garring us lose a day's kep. The fish are aye maist plentiful when the water's troubled; puir beasts! they haena muckle variety in their life—I'm thinking they'll like a storm for the sake o' change; onyway, they're aye strong when the Firth's champing like an ill-willy horse."

"And are ye doing ought weel, Robbie?" said Mrs. Mense.

"No to compleen o'," answered Robbie, "it aye hauds us gaun. I'm thinking we'll be no that ill this year; the red fish looks weel. See to that grilse; ye'll be needing it for the Laird's dinner the day. Did ye ever see a bonnier beast in the water or out o't?"

After considerable bargaining, the grilse

was laid aside together with store of flounders.

"For there's nae saying," said Robbie, "when I may be round again, and it's better to hae a wheen ower mony than ower few—that's philosophy—ye can ask the Laird. I'm thinking to send Peter mair; he's a muckle callant grown, and I see nae occasion I have, to keep a doug, and bark mysel; if it wasna that it wad be an awfu' loss to the haill countryside—I dinna ken what ye wad a' do, wanting me."

"Ye've aye a guid word o' yoursel, Robbie Caryl," said Janet.

"There's ne'er a ane kens me as weel, Jen, my woman," retorted the undaunted Robbie; "if it binna the wife; and the wife's gift is mair for finding out folk's faults than their guid qualities; but when I gie ower coming ye'll find it out; see if ye dinna be

gieing weary looks ilka market-day for Robbie Caryl and the cuddie."

"We'll wait till that time comes, Robbie," said Mrs. Mense; "but, man, hae ye nae mair news than that?"

"Hearken till her noo," said Robbie reflectively; "hearken till the gate o' thae women—ne'er a thing but news in the heads o' them. Jen, I'm awa'—hae ye ony message to your joe? I'm the canniest man gaun—I ne'er was blackfit at a courtin' yet but it throve; and speaking about marryin'—that's what ye ca' *news*, I'm thinking?—the wives in the toun are thrang on the top o' ane e'en now."

"Wha is't Robbie?" asked Janet and her aunt together.

"Oh, I hae gotten till the right thing noo, have I? It's ane that'll ne'er be in this world—it's the minister."

"The minister!" said Mrs. Mense, "and what ill will hae ye at the winsome lad, Robbie Caryl, that ye should say he wad never be married?"

"I said nae sic thing; ye tak folk up, neebor, afore they fa'. He may hae half a hunder wives for onything I care, but I'll just tell him ae guid word o' counsel—he needna fash his thoom about this ane."

"And wha is she that's sae grand?" said the old housekeeper, "set her up! does she think the minister's no guid enough for onybody?"

The Reverend Robert was an immense favourite with Mrs. Mense. She felt it as an injury to the Church that he should not be able to choose where it pleased him.

"I'm no speaking about grandness—she's nae muckle lady; she's just the mistress o' the schule our wee Mary's at, learning to

sew and to behave hersel; but, Mrs. Mense, you're auld—ye dinna mind o' the fancies o' young folk. It's you and me, Jen, that can understand how ane whiles likes ae body better than anither—and ye'll gie me the message to your joe?"

Jen made a furious lunge at the bold Robbie with the poker she had in her hand. Her irons were not heating so well as they should have done. Janet was in a bad humour.

"Dear me, Robbie, did ye say it was the schulemistress?" said Mrs. Mense with some concern; "nae doubt she's a great friend o' our Miss Lillie's—but the misguided lad! He might have seen how Mr. Wright, at Fairholm, made a wreck o' himsel, wi' marryin' Willie Tasker's daughter; but it's nae use speaking—for nothing will learn thae young folk."

"Never you heed, gudewife," said Robbie, "there's nae ill dune. I'll wad ye a' the red fish that comes into the net atween this and Sabbath that she'll no tak' him."

"She'll no tak him—the minister?—she's no blate!"

"Whisht, whisht," said the fisherman, "we needna be misca'ing folk that never did us ony ill. She's as blate as she has ony occasion to be; but there's anither lad in the gate, ye ken—that's it Jen; ye'll mind by yoursel."

"I wish ye wad haud the clavering tongue o' ye," said the indignant Janet; "*I* ken?—I ken nane o' your ill ways—ye needna be putting the name o' them on me; and wha's the ither lad?"

"Do ye think I dinna ken that ye wad never trust me wi' that bit message, if I was

telling about anither young lady's sweetheart? Hout, woman, ye're no gaun to get round me wi' the like o' that. I'm a man to be trusted here where I stand; if I wasna, Jen, I wad ne'er hae had the face to ask a woman o' your experience to send your bit message wi' me; but ye may ken it's safe in my hands—never mortal shall hear tell o't but the ane."

The exasperated Janet threatened Robbie with her hot iron; with a broad laugh the fisherman evaded it, but he did not retreat.

"And Miss Buchanan telled ye, Robbie?" said Mrs. Mense, "weel she's no ower nice o' her counsellors."

"She's nane sae wise as to tell me," said the incorrigible Robbie, "but I have an e'e in my ain head—no to say twa, and them black anes. Ye see ae black e'e's as guid as

three blue anes ony day; for no to speak o' the licht that ilka body can see through, I hae a gift, like the cats, to see in the dark. Na, na, Miss Buchanan has nae thocht I'm in her counsels—but for a' that, I ken; and ye may think when I heard the wives in the toun a' keckling about the minister—I leuch. Some o' them had new found it out, that he was aye wandering about the townend; but he needna fash his thoom—and I've a guid mind to tell him mysel."

"He'll no be muckle heeding," said Mrs. Mense with dignity; "the like o' him, a fine-looking lad that micht get as guid a leddy as ony in the country-side; and she's no even that you could ca' particular bonnie. Oh! thae young callants, how they will aye rin after their ain fancies!"

The prudential demurrings of the Reverend

Robert Insches as to the eligibility of the humble schoolmistress of Fendie, were perfectly justified. The parish decided that she was not eligible—that the minister would clearly throw himself away—that the dignity of the Church would be compromised; but the Reverend Robert was now out of his depths, and had lost the footing of prudence. He was not aware that his wanderings about "the townend," began to be discussed by Robbie Carlyle and his customers. The minister was very much more interested at present in consideration of what was said and done in the little, quiet, dusky parlour, than in any other apartment in Fendie, or in broad Scotland. He had lost his balance; he could no longer manage himself according to his old rules, even though the dearly beloved "position" should be put in

jeopardy. The chances of his pursuit made him a little anxious sometimes, but there was no withdrawal; he must either win or fail.

CHAPTER IV.

I am sick and capable of fears ;
Oppressed with wrongs and therefore full of fears ;
A widow, husbandless, subject to fears ;
A woman, naturally born to fears.

KING JOHN.

Mrs. Buchanan had a good deal of anxiety about the position and prospects of her daughter. People began to speak of those constant visits of the minister, and now, when it seemed likely that some decision must speedily be come to, Mrs.

Buchanan began to think remorsefully of the long-tried familiar friend whose place in their little household, Mr. Insches seemed so resolute to take. Yet she liked Mr. Insches ; she liked him for the simple, natural character which the influence of Helen seemed to draw forth more naturally and simply every day ; she liked him, even for the faults which he could not hide ; and most of all she liked him because he had fallen from his hobby—had lost his depth—and because it was no longer in his power to pretend that he could elevate that lofty head of his, and take his assiduities away. Besides it would be so very suitable ; the modest dignity of his place, equal to the richest yet within the reach of the very poor—its necessary literature and necessary benevolence, which the good mother fancied would suit so well the delicate, impulsive, variable spirit of her only child : all

these things increased her desire to see the suit of Mr. Insches successful—and yet—we are inconsistent always, we human folk,—the gentle Mrs. Buchanan looked wistfully at the address of the Edinburgh newspaper which he sent her constantly, and wondered how William would feel if he saw the new occupant of his long accustomed corner. She did not like, in her kind inconsistency, to come to any distinct explanation with her daughter; often she spoke of Mr. Insches and Helen sometimes blushed as she listened; but the blush now was painful and uneasy. Mrs. Buchanan became very anxious—desiring, and yet not desiring that this should come to some definite end.

Helen too felt her position very painful; night after night the Reverend Robert was there, with his good looks, his good mind, and the little sparks of temper which

diversified and animated them. Week after week passed away, and she saw or heard nowhere but in the newspaper the name of William Oswald. She began to have a disagreeable consciousness that it was possible she might come to like this Reverend Robert, and she began to be a little piqued and angry at his rival for suffering her to remain so long ignorant of all his proceedings and feelings. Helen did not remember then the very decided negative she had put upon his proposal to write; she did not remember anything at that moment, in exculpation of the resolute labourer toiling to the utmost of his stout faculties in the distant city. She only felt impatient, inconsistent, irritable; very much disposed to quarrel with the two candidates for her favour, and still more offended with herself.

In this mood she set out one dull May

afternoon immediately after her little crowd had dispersed, to see a small invalid whose place had been vacant among them for more than a week. It was Robbie Carlyle's little daughter, Mary, who had been ill with some childish epidemic and was now recovering. Helen had been struggling with the most painful mood of her nervous temperament this day—its irritability; she found herself a hundred times on the very point of unnecessary fault-finding—in spite of all her precautions, impatient hasty words had escaped from her lips; and now she was turning her sword against herself, and was in a bitter, painful, unhappy humour which it was best to carry away out of the society of any whom it might wound, into the still country road, along which she went with the unequal pace, now slow, now hasty, which was usual to her.

The gentle summer air, the dreamy silence just touched and made human with its floating far-away sounds of life, the dim sky above with its soft dark clouds and veiled sun—in these was a charm to which the unquiet spirit never failed to answer. A touch of the kindly humanity which makes the whole world kin, might have lifted her up in a moment into the midst of the sunny clouds of her own bright especial heaven; but when Nature was the physician, the effect was different; the unhappy mood stole away into the deep sadness peculiar to her, and she lingered now and then to look over the fair, dim country with those slanting lines of pale sunshine stealing over it, from the head of yon shrouded mountain in the west, her heart sinking into the depths the while. The cap of which Skiddaw wots when it is put on, was shading the dark brow of the Scottish

hill, and the air was subdued and soft, and the wind sighed about the hedges as though its wings were drenched with rain. Few articulate thoughts were in the downcast mind of Helen; only the thread of linked and varied fancies, which sometimes quivered below the sunbeams like a golden chord, was now sad and drooping like the wind. The unconscious tears gathered in her eyes—the shadow fell heavily over her heart. Slowly along the quiet road she wandered enveloped in the mist of her changed mood. The annoyances and the little angers had vanished away, but she was very sad.

Just then she came in sight of the Firth; between her and its pale glittering waves lay the green breadth of the Marsh, with its fine sea-side grass, and pools of deep still water. Nowhere, far or near, was there

grass so smooth and velvet-like, as the close thin-bladed grass of this dangerous play-ground, interdicted to the obedient children of Fendie. But the children of Fendie, like all others, had a craving for interdicted pleasures, and when they got together in bands and could have the countenance of other rebels, the Marsh was a favourite trysting-place; and the bold example of Robbie Carlyle's amphibious boys, overcame scruples of timidity. It was excellent sport to leap over the gleaming pools of salt water; the strong really enjoyed it, and the weak precociously compelled, by fear of ridicule to do as others did, made pretence of enjoying it too.

Pale, slanting, watery sunbeams were gleaming in the salt pools and on the shrunken Firth, as it began to gather volume, and retrace its rapid steps to the shore. It has

strange moods this southern Firth ; you see bare, dreary sand-banks at night, dotted with the stake nets of the fishers, in the very midst of its broad course, where ships will sail bravely when to-morrow's tide is in. The far-away English hills were blotted out with the mist of coming rain, and over the dark hill in the west, the sun threw his flickering, sickly beams, longer and longer drawn out, as he faintly glided downward to his bed in the sea.

The Marsh was somewhere about a mile in extent, stretching along the bank of the Firth eastward from the mouth of the Fendie water. For the most part it looked verdant and tempting at a little distance, and was indeed scarcely so much a Marsh as a great extent of fine sea-side grass—what is called links in other places in Scotland—save that this was a complete net-work of clear salt

water pools, only to be traversed by dint of leaping. As Helen approached its borders a few children were painfully disentangling themselves from its labyrinth. Some of the pools were tolerably deep, and the Fendie children, to increase their dread of the Marsh, had been taught to believe them deeper. The little wanderers on this occasion had been struck with fear as they began to see the tawny waves of the returning Firth roll in on the dark pebbly sand far below. The clouds were gathering close over the sky as though the night was about to fall —some of the small hearts were beating timorously—they were all struggling as they could, towards the road.

In the very heart of the Marsh where lay the deepest, broadest pools of all, shutting in the unwary wanderer on every side, Helen saw a little girl lifting in her arms a small,

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heavy brother, much younger, but not much less than herself. On even ground she could scarcely carry him, but now the young heroine had a desperate attempt to make. The rain had begun, the last lingering sunbeam was gone: all their companions were already out of peril; the poor little sister was essaying to leap over the pool which intercepted her, with the great lumbering boy in her arms.

"Dinna, Jeanie—dinna try't," cried another little girl looking back; "just bide a wee while. I'll rin and get Robbie Caryl—there's nae fears."

But Jeanie had many fears, and the rain began to come heavily down, and Robbie Caryl's cottage was a full quarter of a mile away; so she made the leap, her frightened heart beating loud. It was successful so far; the little blubbering brother was safely landed, but she herself plunged to the knee

into the pool, and her frock was torn, and one of her clogs lost in the tenacious wet sand. Poor Jeanie could not wait to get it out, and every step of her progress must be made at the same peril. She sat down on the sharp grass beside her little brother, and looked at her torn wet frock, and cried bitterly, with visions of a high tide and the dreary darkness, and being drowned, alternating in her mind with terror for what her mother would say about the torn frock and the lost shoe.

But Jeanie must rise and lift little Tammie, and try again; and as she looked wistfully over the dark Marsh, she saw some one taller and more agile than herself, springing step by step over the dangerous pools.

"It's only a woman," said Jeanie to herself, sadly; but immediately the little

heart rose and grew courageous: "It's the mistress!"

She had cured Helen. The cheek of the young schoolmistress of Fendie was glowing through the rain as if it never could be pale. Peter himself, the embryo fisherman, had never leaped those gleaming pools more bravely than Helen did. It was somewhat hard for an amusement to other than boyhood, but it made her eyes sparkle and her heart beat; she had never been blyther than she was now.

He was a serious weight, that little blubbering Tammie, and was somewhat afraid of the honour of being lifted in the arms of the Mistress. It awed him into silence; and Jeanie ventured to pause, to rescue her shoe. The mistress assured her that the pool was not so deep after all, and Jeanie forgot her fears.

It was rather a dreary scene; the rain sweeping down heavier every moment, till against the lowering sky it began to look white, carried on the wind, like long, trailing skirts of some stiff silken garment; a little below, the tawny roaring Firth, making way sullen and strong over his shores, and lashing up on the shingle in long curls of foam, like a lion's mane; and here the raindrops pattering in the ghostly pools, and the little girl at Helen's feet forcing on the recovered shoe, and restraining her weeping in hysteric sobs, while Helen herself grasped the waist of the heavy Tammie with both her hands, and gathered up her dress for the laborious progress to the road.

A passer-by who came in sight on an ascending road at some distance, hurried forward in fear for them when he looked

down. There was no need: as he reached the edge of the Marsh, Helen cleared the last pool. Her dress was thoroughly wet; she had made one or two stumbles, but her rapid movements seemed more graceful, and her face was brighter, the banker Oswald thought, than when he saw her last in the drawing-room of the Manse; for Mr. Oswald was the passer-by—and in the heavy rain and gathering darkness, with only the children to prevent their being alone, he was standing face to face with Helen Buchanan.

The little Tammie was rather a pretty child, and considering how his careful sister and he had spent the afternoon, was a very tolerably clean one; for the pools were very clear, and neither dust nor mud were on the Marsh; so as Helen set him on the ground, and bent down to help and console Jeanie, who had painfully followed her, they made

by no means an ungraceful group—if we except the stout, perplexed elderly gentleman with the umbrella, who, not much less shy than Helen, stood with confused hesitation looking at them, and not knowing what to say.

A nervous tremor had come upon the young schoolmistress; half of it was physical, and proceeded from the unusual exertion she had made, and half of it owned her consciousness of the presence of William Oswald's father. It was natural to her; the fingers which rested on little Jeanie's shoulder trembled a good deal, and Helen's attitude and glowing face were shy—a shyness which was at the same time frank, and an awkwardness by no means ungraceful. The banker meanwhile stood before her and her little *protégés*, and held his umbrella over his own head, and grew slightly red in the face.

But there was no remnant of gracefulness in the embarrassment of the respectable Mr. Oswald. The good man felt a little afraid of the shy, unquiet girl, wondered rather what she would say to him, and felt very much at a loss for something to say to her.

There were sounds of loud, boyish footsteps on the road, as Helen, stooping down, wrapped up the children as she best could to defend them from the rain.

"Eh!" exclaimed a voice corresponding to the feet, as Hector Maxwell of Firthside and his brother came up out of breath; "it's Miss Buchanan—I knew it was Miss Buchanan—and she's droukit. Here's my plaid—take my plaid, Miss Buchanan! We've run a' the road from the brae, because we saw you on the Marsh, and if you had just waited—"

Hector looked indignantly at the little heavy Tammie, and in great haste threw off his plaid.

"Miss Buchanan will not be much better with your plaid, Hector," said Mr. Oswald; "she must take my umbrella; it will be more serviceable, and not so heavy."

Helen answered the somewhat constrained politeness with a little bow.

"Thank you, Hector; but you would be very wet before you got home, if I took your plaid from you."

"But I'm no heeding," said the generous Maxwell. Hector did not need to brush up his English for Helen; she was not so easily shocked as his sister.

"And I shall soon be home," said Helen. "I must go with these children, you know, and see that they are not scolded; and I

am wet already. Come, Tammie. Hector, good-night."

Helen looked up into the banker's face, and her natural frankness struggled for a moment with her shy pride. She was almost inclined to say that she would share his umbrella if he pleased, and the next moment she thought she would say nothing; but finally there was a compromise.

"Good-night, Mr. Oswald," said Helen, as she took little Tammie's hand.

"We are going the same way," said the embarrassed banker; and so they did; and amicably under shelter of one umbrella, with little Jeanie and her brother getting very muddy and wet at their feet, the banker Oswald and Helen Buchanan walked side by side towards the cheerful lights of Fendie.

Mr. Oswald cleared his throat; he rather wanted to begin a conversation, but he did not very well know how. If this young lady was to be Mrs. Insches, the good man said to himself plausibly, it was very necessary that he should at least be acquainted with her; but certain it is that with no other prospective Mrs. Insches would Mr. Oswald have felt himself so uncomfortably conscious. He made a beginning at last on the easiest subject.

"How foolish people are to permit their children to stray out on that Marsh!"

"It is the fault of the bairns themselves," said Helen.

The banker remembered that Miss Swinton, Hope's oracle, applauded our natural Scottish tongue, and it was rather a pretty word "bairns." In another person

he would have thought it vulgar, perhaps, but no one could call that low voice, with its changeful modulations, vulgar, and he began to like listening to it.

"Jeanie is afraid her mother will be angry; but when she sees them so wet, she will forget their misdemeanour, I hope."

Little Tammie had been tied up as well as it was possible to keep him comfortable, but the poor little fellow was very wet notwithstanding, and was getting weary and sleepy as he trudged along the road. Helen had insinuated him between the banker and herself, and so he was protected by the wonderful umbrella, and moreover had his thumb to suck consolation from, which melancholy pleasure the hapless Jeanie, walking on Helen's other side, and laboriously gathering up her torn, wet frock, and think-

ing of what her mother would say, was quite deprived of.

"You seem fond of children, Miss Buchanan," said the formal banker, after a considerable pause.

Helen began to forget the speciality of the case, in that this perplexed man was William Oswald's father. She did not like, so sensitive and easily moved as she was herself, to see any one ill at ease beside her.

"I like them," she said frankly, "perhaps it is because I spend so much of my time among them; but I like their company."

"And does it never weary you?" said the curious Mr. Oswald.

Helen paused a moment—a sort of half-remembrance of the mood in which she left the school-room that day, just floating like a cloud over the spirit which had shaken

out its wings and was up again, singing in mid-heaven.

"We all weary sometimes," she said; "but I not more, I think, than others. It is pleasant to work, and my own work, I fancy, is pleasanter to me than any other would be."

Mr. Oswald was a good deal astonished; he did not quite know how to answer so honest a statement, for the good man had taken it for granted that the young schoolmistress must be very sick of her labour, and eager to escape from it, which indeed she was not, except sometimes, when her wayward moods were upon her.

"I did not know that you knew Hector Maxwell," said Mr. Oswald, awkwardly; "do you admit those rude boys to your liking as well as the little girls, Miss Buchanan?"

"Hector Maxwell is not rude," said Helen. "He is a genuine boy, and a great friend of mine. Yes, indeed; I like them all very well, until they become young gentlemen and young ladies."

"And what then?" said the banker.

"And then I become a little afraid of them, and they do not suit me any longer," said Helen, smiling, as she paused at an open door, where the mother of Jeanie was looking out anxiously for her little truants. "I thank you, Mr. Oswald; good-night."

CHAPTER V.

Is she not proud? doth she not count her blessed,
Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought
So worthy a gentleman to be her bridegroom?

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE little roundabout Miss Insches began to grow disturbed about the length of her own continuance in office. She saw that very soon her dominion over the dining-room and the drawing-room, and her share of the comforts of the library must come to a close; and while the good-humoured sister anticipated, with considerable relief, her return

to the plebeian, unpretending home where there was no necessity for being always genteel, she felt also a good many qualms about resigning Robert, and Robert's beautiful chairs and tables, into the keeping of a stranger.

"For ye see, Miss Buchanan, she's young," said Miss Insches to herself, not daring to have any other confidante, "and for a' she's nae better—I'm meaning for a' she's a hantle puirer than oursels, no to speak of Robert—she has gey high notions like himsel'; and I'm very doubtful that she'll just let Nelly dust the big room, and no think of putting to her ain hand. Robert says I should do that too, but he's a young lad for a' he's the minister, and doesna ken a'thing. I wish she may just be mindful o' himsel'. He's aye been used wi' his ain way, puir man, and has been

muckle made o', and muckle thought o'; and I'm sure a better lad—"

Miss Insches paused with an incipient tear in her eye. The worshipped minister son, of whom the mother at home was so proud — the omnipotent brother whose slightest word was law—alas! was he to cease to be an idol—to come down from his absolute throne, and be limited to a constitutional monarchy like any other man, with perhaps a young, proud wife exacting service from him, instead of rendering the devoted homage which was Robert's due? Miss Insches's eye again wandered over the shining tables of the sacred drawing-room, and her heart was troubled.

"He's aye had his ain way, puir man!" she repeated, mournfully, as she carefully closed the door, and sighed. Poor Robert! he was to be married, as all Fendie said—

he was to have his own way no longer.

The Reverend Robert was seated at his writing table in the library; it was a study day. Miss Insches stole noiselessly in, closed the door, and took her seat at the window, with her seam in her hand. Robert was writing his sermon; the good sister sewed those new shirts of his in devout silence; when her thread fell she picked it up with a look of guilt—she might have disturbed Robert. Foolish Robert! the young wife would not reverence his stillness so.

"Janet," said Robert graciously, "we are to dine at Kirkmay on Monday. I have just had a note from Mrs. Whyte."

"Ye dinna mean me, too, Robert?" said Miss Insches.

"Certainly I mean you too, Janet," said

the young man, with some impatience. "Why, you have been at Kirkmay before."

"Yes, Robert, I'm meaning that," responded the dutiful sister humbly, "but it's the Monday of the preachings, is't no? and will there be more folk than ministers?"

"Mrs. Whyte is to have a few friends," said the Reverend Robert, with a conscious smile, "and there is no reason why they should only be ministers."

"I didna say there was," said Miss Insches; "is onybody we ken to be there, Robert?"

Robert smiled again. His sister had come to understand the particular meaning of this smile.

"I fancy Miss Maxwell of Mossgray will be there," he said with a blush, as he returned to his sermon.

Miss Insches applied herself to her shirt with another little suppressed sigh. She understood very well what was meant by Miss Maxwell of Mossgray; and Miss Insches by no means disliked Helen; but the great question whether she would be sufficiently careful of Robert when advanced to the dignity of Robert's wife was hard and difficult to solve. Miss Insches shook her head as she went on with her work. On Monday—the crisis might come on Monday.

Monday when it came, was bright with the sunshine, and fragrant with all the sweet sounds and odours of May. On the preceding day had been the half yearly Occasion, the Communion Sabbath of Kirkmay, and the Monday's services were of thanksgiving, according to the reverent usage of Scotland. Mr. Wright of Fairholm

was the officiating minister, and preached a chaotic ponderous sermon, which, according to the judgment of the Kirkmay elders, had "guid bits in it; very guid bits; but was naething like the minister's." The minister was very much beloved in his parish; they rather prided themselves, these simple people, on their possession of a man who wrote books, even though the books were but sixpenny ones; and read his small biographies with proud regard. The one gentle weakness of his fine character came out as an excellence in their eyes, and there were few in Kirkmay who did not boast of "the minister."

After dinner, while the gentlemen were still downstairs, Mrs. Whyte, with her lady guests pleasantly occupied the comfortable plain drawing-room, which, though it was by no means so fine, did yet, Miss Insches

could not fail to perceive, look a very much more habitable place than the corresponding room in the Manse of Fendie. Mr. Whyte dabbled a little in all the gentler sciences—the flowers which his wife cultivated, because she cultivated everything beautiful which was within her reach, the good minister classified, and talked of with gentle erudition; and specimens of fine seaweed, and delicate mosses, and fossils not very rare, and shells picked up on the margin of the Firth, evinced his universal liking' and his only rudimentary knowledge of the kindred philosophies of nature. He was not very learned in these various departments; he only marvelled over the wondrous mechanism of everything which came from his Master's hand, and cherished them all tenderly for their Maker's sake.

The ladies—Mrs. Gray, Lilias, and Helen

were the only *lay* persons present—were very comfortably gathered into groups in the drawing-room discussing the notable things of their own district: the church, their several families. The small company was by no means dull, especially as Mrs. Whyte's children, the little boy and girl about whom their frank mother had said there could not be two opinions, were, with all their might, entertaining the guests.

The room was rather an oddly shaped room; it had a curiously angled corner, with a window in it, which Mrs. Whyte chose as her summer seat, and playfully called her boudoir. The work-table which stood in it was scarcely clear of its ordinary lumber even now; there were traces that the minister's wife had been sitting there this morning, singing over her household work the low-voiced songs of a pure mind,

happily at ease. Lilias Maxwell had strayed alone into Mrs. Whyte's chair by the window. She was very pale, and as she looked out upon the verdant country, and the Firth and the hills far away, her fingers came slowly towards each other, and were painfully clasped as was their wont. It was drawing near again—that day which might change the current of her life.

As she sat there, Helen Buchanan approached quietly; the pale, sad, absorbed face touched her to the heart.

"You are very sad, Lilias," said Helen, as she stood screening her friend from the other occupants of the room, "but you will not tell me why; will you let me say anything—do anything for you?"

"Yes, Helen." Lilias rested her head silently upon her companion's shoulder, and closed her eyes. It was a relief to her;

her heart was sick—she could not speak of it, but here in silent confidence she could lean for a moment the weight of her trouble. "I have heard nothing; I have had no word this long, long, weary time—and the day is coming near again. To-morrow—after to-morrow will be the day."

There was nothing more said, for the sickness rose up blank over the heart of Lilias, and the tears were in Helen's eyes; but the drooping head of the Lily of Moss-gray, overcharged with heavy rain, leaned on the friend's breast, and was comforted. She remembered the moment long after, and so did Helen. More than many words—more than much bewailing together of a sorrow more openly confessed, did that silent confidence bind them together.

The conversation going on in the room

was not in the least abstract; local and individual were all the subjects under discussion, and the talk about them might have been called gossip. It certainly was of the genus if not of the species to which that unpopular name is given. In a "countryside," and above all in a little town, metropolis of a country-side, where each family has a certain connection with all, conversation, unless galvanically kept up in the region of books, must glide into this channel; and the clerical character which this little company of ladies possessed, as strongly marked as their husbands below, increased the necessity. Having satisfactorily dismissed the children of the respective Manses, and ascertained who had had hooping cough, and which it was who had come so easily through the measles, the respective parish over which she presided

was the next grand object before the mind of the clerical lady. Its successes, its adversities, its sins, its great people and its small; and each parish lady was interested in her neighbour's dominions.

Now it happened that this chapter of backslidings was a peculiarly sad and melancholy one; revealing under the healthful rural air and sweet fresh sunshine, a moral atmosphere, dense, unwholesome and heavy. While one listened to what those lamenting people said, one's arcadian visions of rural purity sorrowfully vanished. Follies of youth the world said; alas! not follies, but sins, dark, far-spreading, unregarded; and public opinion had even ceased in the peasant class to brand them with the unutterable disgrace which is their fate in others. Young, fresh girls heard of those vices—heard them lightly spoken of by

older lips grown callous—and saw the sinner scarcely disgraced at all; it was a great evil, shadowing the souls of many as with a low, spreading, deadly tree, between them and the sun.

"Could nothing be done," whispered Helen in Mrs. Whyte's ear, as trembling with bitter shame, and pain, she had listened to some story of the fallen, "you who have influence; who may dare interfere in such matters; could the air not be purified in some way—could nothing he done?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Gray, "it is nothing but our evil nature; we cannot mend it; what can we do?"

"We cannot mend it," said Helen in her low, vehement voice; "but we can strive, endeavour, fight—do anything, anything, to change such a state of things. It is our work in the world; the other

things are only by the way; this is our work—what we were born for. To pull away all obstructions, to let in, everywhere, the light of heaven. If we once did that, this evil could not be—surely it could not be."

"I think so, Helen," said the kind Mrs. Whyte; "we, in our position, might do much more than we are doing; but at least, we all lament these evils bitterly—you believe that?"

Helen did not answer; she wanted that experience of the maturer mind which could discriminate between an exceptional and an ordinary case, and refrain from sweeping judgments. The shock of pain with which she heard of evil, was always with her, a spur to endeavour something against it; but while others lacked will, she lacked power. She could not cast herself into the crusading

ranks and assail the powers of darkness as she thirsted to do; but the impulse of warfare was strong upon her—she could not rest.

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Gray, "you do not know yet as you will know, the misery of this wicked world, and how vain it is striving with it; every day I live I see it more and more."

"Yet it is to be pure," said Helen with her head erect and her eye kindling, "it is to be filled with the knowledge of Him—it is to be made fit for His reign. I do not know —no one living may see that day—but I think sometimes that if we believed that, we could have no doubt, no fear. We should look to the great hope which lies upon the world like sunshine, and not to the misery which it earns every day. It is to be pure—God is pledged to us that it shall be so; but

our arms rust, and we use them not—our days pass and we do nothing; yet *we* are to labour for it—it is so ordained—and it is to be pure!"

Helen's eyes suddenly fell, her head drooped. The gentlemen, some of them, had already strayed upstairs, and close beside her stood the Reverend Robert listening with ostentatious attention.

"Yes," said the somewhat rough voice of Mr. Wright, of Fairholm; "a minister's life is a very hard life, Miss Buchanan; we have to labour as you say; the very Sabbath which is a resting day to everybody else, is a hard-working day to a minister."

Helen turned rapidly away; it was a strange anti-climax.

"Miss Buchanan did not mean that," said Mrs. Whyte. "Miss Buchanan likes the good, wholesome work. She thinks we

do too little, instead of too much, Mr. Wright."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the cumbrous, heavy man, "there is a great deal of truth in that. The people ought to know their own duty, and not leave the work entirely to us as they do; and the elders really need stirring up; but a minister—few people know how much is laid on the shoulders of a minister."

"And you, Mr. Insches?" asked Mrs. Whyte smiling, as her quick eye glanced over the great, stooping, uncouth figure of the strong man beside her in whom was no impulse to work, and who actually felt fatigue more easily than would the nervous delicate girl.

Mr. Insches hesitated; it was not his policy to differ with Helen; but he had not received the inspiration much more than his

sluggish brother. He was still, to a considerable extent, a matter-of-course man, doing what he must do, and not very much more.

"The ministerial life," said the Reverend Robert with some dignity; "is a life of great exertion. We are never perfect of course, but it is a most laborious life, the life of a conscientious minister."

It was a compromise—it pleased nobody. Helen turned away, unconsciously disappointed. She had expected something better.

"'Deed, Robert," said Miss Insches. "I'm aye feared the ither way about you. It's my terror, Mrs. Whyte, that he'll just wear himsel out, and I'm sure if he was to get a wife and I kent beforehand wha she was to be, I would warn her no to put such nonsense notions into his head; for ye see,

Miss Buchanan—Eh! Robert, is there onything ails ye?—are ye no weel?"

But Robert was not "no weel"—he was only frowning upon his too-honest sister, and making an elaborate face. It was too late; all the eyes in the room were turned to the blushing, angry countenance of the Reverend Robert, and he heard tittering in the corners. He turned away full of wrath—it would not do; there was no putting the restraints of delicacy or prudence over the simplicity of Janet.

CHAPTER VI.

"You are altogether governed by humours."

KING HENRY IV.

THE crisis did come, though not as Miss Insches anticipated. Helen carefully guarded herself, as they returned home, from the society of the Reverend Robert, and managed that the opportunity he sought should not be afforded to him. She was thoughtful and grave that night, Mrs. Buchanan perceived; for the shadow of a selfish pride had darkened for the time the firmament of Helen. The banker showed no sign of courtesy or kind ness; the banker's wife on the rare occasions

when she met her, never mentioned William's name. William himself, busy in the distant city seemed to have given up the contest; to have forgotten the romance of his youth; to have left Helen as he had left Fendie, because she was too humble and too quiet. She did not care—she would not care! she protested to herself with a proud flush on her cheek, and proud tears in her eyes that it was nothing to her; but involuntarily an evil, angry feeling had sprung up in her mind—she could avenge herself!

A week ago she had felt painfully that it was just possible that even she might be inconstant—that the Reverend Robert might some time glide into William's place. She felt now that this was impossible; that her own rapid pace could never harmonize with that slightly ostentatious dignity of the Reverend Robert's; that her

impetuous mind must be chafed and irritated beyond measure, if it ever were yokefellow with his; yet the very discovery goaded her to go blindly on. In the bitterness of her pride she thought she could not reject the only man who thought her good enough to be his equal; and when she remembered how long a time it took before even he ceased to be ashamed of his incipient tenderness for the poor schoolmistress the bitterness increased until it flooded her very heart. There was a gloom upon the world; the evil and misery over which she had spread the golden tissue of young hope began to appear darkly exaggerated to the opposite extreme. Those whom she would have remembered for ever, forgot her, and those who made her their choice, were ashamed of the power which compelled them so to do. Her deep melancholy fell upon Helen, as it had never fallen

before; the coming of a new day did not dispel it. It was such a sorrow as she could not tell, and so she bore it proudly, bitterly, and in silence.

At the midday interval the watchful Mrs. Buchanan prevailed on her daughter to go out, to do some simple errands in the town. She generally managed all these matters herself; but the good mother was a skilled physician, and knew how something, trivial enough in itself, might clear the atmosphere in a moment and bring out the sunshine. Mrs. Buchanan too, was anxious and uneasy: when it seemed now sure that the Reverend Robert must succeed, she thought remorsefully of William, the son of her own training, to whom her house had been so long a second home. She remembered the confidence that there had been between them, and how old ties would have been made stronger and

tenderer, had it been he who was the new son; and then she began to feel that Mr. Insches, with all his good qualities, was a stranger; that he would introduce a new intruding element—that her sole child would be no more her own.

So the mother sent Helen forth with quiet sighs, and Helen went about her errand sadly, the gloom in her heart obscuring the gentle skies of May.

She walked slowly as her manner was in her times of depression, taking in the common sights and sounds around her into the mist in her own heart where they remained to bring back in other moods remembrances of that dark hour. She had executed all her mother's commissions, and concluded her business by a visit to Maxwell Dickson's low dark shop, on her way home. She got such literature as he had from the librarian

of Fendie, and it served now and then to enliven the long solitary evenings—the evenings which were not sufficiently solitary now.

On Maxwell Dickson's counter lay an unbound book, very clean and very new. Helen took it up as she put the volumes which she brought with her, into the librarian's dingy hands. It was still damp from the press; no one had opened it before. The subject attracted her; it was one of the publications of the New Crusade.

The social science—how to make men better, nobler, purer: how to attack in their own camp the declared evils of our land and time—was the subject of this book; the science of that great discontent which has seized upon so many able minds happily, now—the science of aggression against all vileness, all pollution. This was

the subject of the book, and the name of it kindled a little the dim light in the eyes of Helen. She turned it over rapidly to glean what she could of its contents.

Maxwell Dickson in vain tries to make his young customer hear what he is saying to her. A sudden flush has covered her face—a sudden thrill springs up through the bounding pulses which were so languid a moment before; the slight nervous start—the head lifted so swiftly—the motion of the eager fingers which hold these pages open. From some unseen hand the electric touch is given: what is the cause? Helen is reading in the new book.

"The writer remembers well the arguments urged upon him once with the enthusiastic faith of youth, by one who desired a new order of chivalry vowed and dedicate to the service of God and the poor. 'It is

not well—surely it is not well to withdraw from the evils which are in us and around us. I say we are bound to do battle with them—not to stand on our defence alone, but to carry the war into the camp of the enemies. I think sometimes that the state of war must be the only good state for those who have sin natural to them as we have, and that if these words resist, and struggle, were withdrawn from our language we would be no longer human; for when we let our arms fall, our hearts fall, and weariness comes upon us, and distrust and gloom; and out of the living world we come into the narrow chamber of ourselves, and the sun sets upon us—' It is the philosophy of a young heart; of one who has not yet travelled far from the East, and whom the vision splendid still attends upon the way; but because it is

youthful and has the breath of enthusiasm in it, it is no less true."

Maxwell Dickson is impatient; he pulls Miss Buchanan's sleeve, and with that thrill of nervous strength upon her she is compelled to withdraw those new damp pages from their office of shading her flushed cheek, and moving features; but Helen is not angry; she lifts her eyes which dazzle him with their unusual brightness, to the honest man's stolid face. He does not know what to make of this variable visitor of his; he thinks she looked very different when she entered the shop, but he fancies it must just be one of the whims of "thae women."

"I'm saying," said Maxwell Dickson, "that the new books have come noo, for this month, Miss Buchanan. This is the twalt— I got Blackwood and the rest o' them the day

—and the minister's got Blackwood; but ye may hae your pick o' the rest."

The rest were not very tempting; edifying serials, cheap travesties of the Copperfields and Pendennises of the time; the adventures of London "gents," who had not any compensating good quality to make amends for the miserable life which they recorded; vile books with which, because they are cheap, the libraries of country towns infest the minds of the young, and impress the "gent" character upon the young men who patronise them. Helen did not look at the books. It was a clumsy feint of the pawkie Maxwell; he thought she would forgive him the breach of his promise to keep the one especial Blackwood for her, when she heard it was given to the minister.

But Helen had no thought of Blackwood, nor even of the minister; he had left her

mind as the cloud left it. In her happy tremor she forgot the Reverend Robert. She thought only of this in her hand, this messenger of the true heart which she had so vainly doubted.

"Ay," said the librarian, "that's a new thing; a gentleman brocht it in here, that's come frae Edinburgh this morning. I dinna ken what it's aboot mysel', but he said it was grand, and something aboot a Fendie man that wrote it. I didna tak particular notice, but—Maggie, didna yon gentleman say that it was a Fendie man that made the new book on the counter?"

"Ay faither," said the more polite Maggie, Maxwell's buxom daughter. "He said it was a Fendie young gentleman; but he wadna tell us wha."

"And you do not know?" said Helen, with her wavering blush and smile.

"Na," said the stolid Maxwell, "except it be, maybe, Dr. Elliot's son, that's at the college learning to be a doctor, or Maister Nicol Shaw, the writer, or the minister, or—I'm sure I dinna ken. It's no in the library, Miss Buchanan, and it's no' my ain either, or ye micht get a reading o't, if ye wad promise no' to cut up the leaves, and to keep it out o' the gate o' the bairns; but it's no' my ain. I durstna even sell't if I had a customer."

And Helen durst not buy it, even if it had been Maxwell's own; but she stood and looked at it with longing eyes. She remembered her own words so well; she remembered the winter night when William in his corner by the fireside announced to her his going to Edinburgh, his entrance on the man's work, of which so often in her eager, ambitious mind she had dreamed; and he

too remembered it. The romance of the old times will never die. She had belted on his spurs and his sword in yonder quiet evening, and now the lady's colour was on the lance of the true knight!

And Helen returned along the main street, her heart within her, singing like a bird, and the heavens and the earth bright with a sunshine more radiant than the smiles of May. He was a wise man, that grave resolute William; if his blow were long of coming, it was a mighty blow when it came, and cast down all defences. The hopes of the Reverend Robert perished as incautious buds perish in a night's frost. He was forgotten.

Mrs. Buchanan in the little parlour heard the light, quick step without, and knew by its pace that the gloom was gone; but she also was occupied within, and somewhat

puzzled, was turning over the damp, uncut pages of a new book too.

"I do not know what this is, Helen," said Mrs. Buchanan, as her daughter entered the room, "but I suppose William thought it would please you. It came by the coach, my dear, and it is directed in William's hand."

Helen sat down by the table to look at that especial passage again. Her heart was full; she wanted to say something, but could not say it, her shyness veiling the new joy, as well as the emotions of so frank a a face could be veiled; but that was not saying much. At last she rose and laid the book before her mother, and stood half behind her leaning upon her shoulder.

"Mother, William would be right if he thought this would please me almost better

than anything else in the world:—it is William's own."

Mrs. Buchanan took her daughter's hands and looked into her face. The head drooped, the eyes were cast down. Helen could not meet the scrutinizing glance; but they understood each other, and in the misty, tremulous period which followed, the heart of the good mother lightened too. She dismissed the Reverend Robert with a gentle sigh, and she received again the old friend, the son William, feeling sure now that there could be no competitor for the place he had held so long.

When her scholars were finally dismissed that day—and Mrs. Buchanan heard Helen's voice singing snatches of old songs before the last little one had made her farewell curtsey at the school-room door—Helen took

her book in her hand and went away over the bridge and through the long, waving grass to the waterside. She chose one little dell, her favourite spot, where the trees closely circling it round, left one green, swelling bank, upon the brink of the water, on which the sunshine fell through a network of boughs and leaves. On the opposite side of the river, within sight of her resting-place, burns were running down like so many choristers into the broad stream, and in the middle of the strong brown current, eddies played fantastically, and by the bank branches of long willows swept the tide, and the dark alder and the delicate ash leaned over, glassing their foliage in its waves. And there the young dreamer sat absorbed, lingering over the kindred thoughts which kept pace so truly to the music of her own, and starting now and then as the rapid fancies

poured upon her like a flood, and she shaped the future in that fairy loom—a future not such as common dreamers choose. Noble labour, keeping time to the great universal harmonies which God has planted in His world—work such as befits His followers, who for men became a man.

She seemed to hear the grand and noble chimes with which all nature accompanies the work of those who seek to speed the coming of His kingdom. The light of common day was radiant to her with the sunshine of promise; it should yet shine upon a purer world, a country ransomed by its King; and she forgot the pain, and difficulty, and miseries that intervened for joy of the certain end.

But amid the dreamings of Helen, there came the interrupting sound of a hurried, bounding footstep, and almost before she

could look up to see who the intruder was, Hope Oswald plunged down upon her, out of breath. Hope had arrived in Fendie only that morning, and had been seeking Helen at home. She was overjoyed to find her here.

"I saw you reading a book," exclaimed Hope, when the first greeting was over. "I am quite sure you were reading a book —Helen, may I not see it? Why did you put it away?"

"It is a grave book, Hope, not such as you would like," said Helen, looking as she felt, embarrassed and conscious.

"But I like grave books—sometimes," said Hope. "I am fifteen—I am not a girl now, Helen; but do you mind what Tibbie said, last Hallowe'en? You were to get your fortune out of a book. Oh, Helen,

will you tell me? Have you ever got your fortune yet?"

Helen fairly turned her burning cheek away, with a nervous start. So it was fulfilled, the simple prophecy of Tibbie; the hour and the book had come, and this was "the fortune" of Helen. She did not make any answer. She held her precious volume under her shawl and looked over the wan water, away into the vacant air, with her changeful smile.

"I think I know," said the sagacious Hope.

"What do you know, Hope?" said Helen.

But Hope was perverse.

"Helen, Miss Swinton is coming, but only for a day, and little Mary Wood is to stay all the vacation. Miss Swinton wants

to see you, Helen, and she said she would take you to Edinburgh; but I think you should not go, Helen."

"Why?"

Hope paused, and as she could think of no satisfactory answer, went on, on another course.

"Helen, William is perhaps coming home —only for awhile; you don't know how much William has to do now; and, Helen, people say he is clever. Do you think he is?"

There was some pleasant moisture subduing the unusual brightness of Helen's eyes. Her voice was lower than usual too, and the sensible Hope observed keenly.

"No, Hope," said Helen, with some tremor. "I think he is not clever. I think—"

"I don't care for that," said Hope,

bravely. "Are you going home, Helen? Will you let me go too? It is only other people who call him clever, you know, Helen; but he is *our* William."

CHAPTER VII.

"Werena my heart licht, I wad die."

GRIZZEL BAILLIE.

At the same bright hour of noon as that on which Helen set out so sadly, commissioned with her mother's domestic errands, Lilias Maxwell sat in the sunshine upon the mossy steps of the old sundial in the garden of Mossgray. She had her work in her hand as usual, and was sewing listlessly, with long intervals of idleness. It was an occupation very ill-suited for her at that time, for there was nothing in it to

deliver her from the sway of her own thoughts; and so she pursued the quiet work and the long trains of musing together, looking, as she always did, very pale and very sad. To-morrow—to-morrow was the day.

The "soul of happy sound" surrounded her on every side, and she was faintly conscious of it; the drowsy stir of summer life, the hum of passing bees, the ripple of the water as it went on its way, plaintively, beyond the willows, softened by the warm medium of that sunny air through which they came, fell gently on her ear—perhaps they soothed her unawares; but we feel the solemn weight of our humanity more heavily when the heart of Nature throbs beside us in its spring joy, conscious of an inner world, whose revolutions and vicissitudes are of greater import to ourselves than all the happy changes of the earth.

But as the old man looked out from the projecting turret-window, it pleased him to see where she was, and how she was employed—for Lilias was singing, and the sunshine stealing through the trees rested on her head. He could not catch the words, and scarcely the music of her song, but the gentle human voice mingled with the familiar cadence of the river, and the young head drooped in graceful meditation, beneath the joyous skies of noon. He thought the cloud was beginning to break and disappear; he fancied that the youthful life was asserting its native elasticity, and he turned in to his books with his benign smile.

But it was not so. She was singing indeed, but her voice was so low that it scarcely ever rose above the murmuring tone of the accompanying water; and she

had chosen fit words to express the caprice of a sick heart. It was the brave Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad, "Werena my heart licht, I wad dee"—most sad of all the utterances of endurance. Lilias had never known before that sick and flickering lightness of the strained heart.

Her hands fell listlessly upon her lap; her head drooped forward—so pale it was and troubled — into the golden air; her mind was away, wandering painfully through all the bitter hypotheses of care and anxious sorrow, and the slow notes stole murmuring over her lip, the unconscious plaint of her weariness. Who has not felt that contradiction? who does not know the strength and life of pain, and how it buoys up the feeble almost as hope does?—"Werena my heart licht, I wad dee."

As she sat thus, Halbert entered the

grounds of Mossgray, and perceiving Lilias, advanced to her with some hesitation. He seemed to be doubtful whether he should speak to her or no, and gave a wavering glance up to the turret-window of Mossgray's study as he passed. But Mossgray was seated in the dusk of the large apartment, with content upon his face—content for both the children of his old age, and good hope that the cloud of Lilias' firmament was floating away. The young man went on with a slow, reluctant step to the sundial: she had not noticed him, and unseen he listened to the pathetic burden of her song.

"Werena my heart licht, I wad dee." Halbert had never heard the words before, and they struck him strangely.

Lilias started as she heard his step; she had fallen into strange habits of late—customs not common to the calm and

thoughtful composure of her nature. Such fancies as the poet's Margaret had, as she sat by her solitary door, while her eyes

> "Were busy in the distance, shaping things
> That made her heart beat quick."

It startled her very much, this sudden footstep. She turned her head with a sharp, quick flush of pain, and then it drooped again so languidly.

"Is it you, Halbert?"

"Lilias," said Halbert, with a difficult attempt at cheerfulness, "it is very rare to hear you sing, and that strange song. Where does it come from?"

"Do you think it strange?" said Lilias. "I think it is not strange, but only very sad and true. Grizzel Baillie must have had a sick heart sometimes, and it sang to her so."

But the stalwart, healthful Halbert had never been sick at heart.

"I do not understand it very well," he said frankly; "but where did you get it, Lilias?"

"My mother had a maid called Barbara," said Lilias with her faint smile, "and, like Desdemona's, she carried this old, plaintive music about with her. She did not die singing it; but I think, in her homely fashion, she knew its meaning well. I had it from her. But, Halbert, you are not well —something has troubled you!"

"No, Lilias." He was looking very pitifully at the pale, calm face now raised to his.

"What is it then? There is no evil news from the North?"

"No, Lilias," repeated Halbert, "nothing has happened to distress me; but—I wish

you would tell me why you are so pale. Have you any friend ill? are you afraid of—"

Lilias had risen from her low seat in eager haste; her fingers were clasped together; the feverish hectic of anxiety was burning on her cheek.

"What is it?—tell me."

"I do not know," faltered Halbert, looking at her humbly, as if he had done wrong; "perhaps it is nothing—but I got a letter for you in Fendie, Lilias."

She could not speak; her lips were dry and would not come together; but she held out her hand with a gesture of angry, commanding impatience, such as never mortal saw before in Lilias Maxwell.

And he placed the letter in the trembling, outstretched hand—the ominous, mournful letter, with its border and seal of mourning.

He saw her eye fall on the strange hand-writing of the address; he heard the low groan with which the heart breaks; and then she turned away.

She turned away, groping in the noon sunshine like one blind; and Halbert stood in reverent pity, watching the tottering, rapid steps which went sheer forward to the door of the house, leaving footprints among the flowers, and breaking down the snowy, drooping head of one of the cherished lilies of Mossgray. Like it, Lilias was crushed to the ground. The honest heart of Halbert melted as he sat down on the steps of the sundial. Man as he was, he could have wept for her; the shadow of sympathetic grief came over him, and Halbert sat still and mused while the shadows lengthened on the dial at his head, thinking as he had never thought before.

"What has become of Lilias, Halbert?" said Mossgray.

The young man started; his own face was very grave and melancholy, but the smile of good pleasure with which he had looked upon Lilias from his turret-window was still upon the lip of Adam Graeme.

"Lilias has gone in," said Halbert, hurriedly—"Lilias is ill—I mean something has happened, Mossgray."

"What has happened, Halbert?" Mossgray was still smiling.

"I cannot tell—she has lost some friend. I brought a letter, an Indian letter to her, from the town:—the seal was black—it seemed to carry news of a death."

The face of Mossgray changed.

"My poor child!—my poor Lilias! Halbert, I trust, I hope you are wrong; but if you are not—"

The old man covered his face with his hand as he turned away. He remembered what it was to be made desolate.

The long, bright hours stole on, but no one in Mossgray saw the broken lily. An unexpressed understanding of some calamity fell upon the household; the blinds were drawn down in the family rooms—the voices were hushed even in the kitchen, and when any went up or down stairs, they went in silence, as if death, and the reverence that belongs to death, were in the house. But the door of Lilias' room was not opened, and though the old man himself lingered near it ready to catch any sound, he would permit no intrusion on her; for now there could be no hope that Halbert was wrong, and the grief of his youthful days came back to the heart of Adam Graeme, as he thought

of those young hopes setting, like the sun, in the dark sea of death.

It was twilight, and he had returned to his study—soft, downy masses of clouds just touched with the lingering colours of the sunset were piled up like mountains of some dreamy fairyland on that wonderful placid sea of heaven, and long strips of coast, and floating tinted islands stretched along the whole breadth of the sky. He sat, sadly, looking at them, and thinking of the holy, calm land beyond where the sun of hope and promise sets never more, when his watchful ear caught the sound of a slow step ascending the stair. He looked towards the door with painful interest. It was Lilias. She had laid aside the light summer dress which she had worn in the morning, and the old man started as he looked upon the

shadowy, drooping figure in its heavy, black garments, and the perfectly pale face on which no shade of colour remained. He rose to meet her; but Lilias seemed comparatively calm.

"I have brought it to you, Mossgray."

She spoke very slowly as if deliberate pain were necessary to produce each single word. She had brought *it*—the messenger of death.

And laying it on the table before him, Lilias sat down on Charlie's chair, and leaning her heavy head upon her hand, lifted her eyes to the old man's face as he read the letter.

Such a letter he had once received—but this was written by a friend of the dead, and written with tears as it had been read, though the tears were very different. The

writer said his dear friend Grant, travelling for his health to some place among the mountains where health was to be found, had joined a British Company, a few officers and a small band of men, on the way; that one of the revolted Affghan tribes had encountered them, and after a desperate and unavailing struggle, the small, brave force had been utterly cut to pieces, and it was impossible even to recover the bodies of the slain. Mossgray shuddered as he came to this conclusion of the kind, well-meaning letter, and felt what torture it must have inflicted; yet it was gently done, and in few words, as is the kindest, when such tidings are to be told.

She was looking at him; with the deep, blue, wakeful eyes which cast wan light like the moon over her colourless face, she was reading his countenance.

"My poor Lilias!" said the kind Mossgray—he could say nothing more.

And then, in her slow, painful way, she began to speak. It was so great a grief to hear every distinct convulsive word as she uttered it, that the old man could hardly gather their import while he listened. She did not look at him now; her eyes were wandering through the vacant room, opened widely, as though she dared not cast down their lids, and the slow tide of her speech—those single words which came from her lips, like so many life-drops from a heart, pained to the utmost the gentle soul of Adam Graeme. She wanted to tell him that now she was alone—that she had only one wish now, separate from Mossgray, and that was to see his mother.

"My poor child," said the old man, as

Lilias came to this point, and laboured with her convulsed utterance to articulate the words: "We will speak of this another time when we *can* speak of it; but now you must rest."

And when he spoke of rest she laid down her head upon her hands, and her agony returned upon her.

"Lilias," said the old man, "what if he had changed?—what if you had learned that he was not what you believed him to be? Rather thank God that bravely in honour and faith, he has been taken home; in the odour and grace of youth, before evil days or stains came upon him. Lilias, there are sorrows harder than yours—you shall find again him whom you have lost. There are those who have lost, and shall find never more, because they are parted not by this

faithful and pure death, but by the dark barriers of sin and change. Lilias, my good child!"

She did not hear him; the words fell on her ear indefinite as the sound of the stream without, for words do not bring comfort to the desolate heart of grief when the blow has fallen newly.

And then she went away again slowly and painfully to her own darkened room. Halbert met her on the stair but she did not speak to him, and her wan face, and deep mourning dress, awed the light-hearted Halbert into reverential silence. He was not light-hearted then—he almost felt that his own happiness was selfish in the presence of such grief.

And the old man paced heavily his large, low, study-room, thinking with tender compassion of his ward, the orphan, and the

widowed. It brought back the days of his own pained and struggling youth, and he remembered how gentle to him would have been this hand of death instead of the more cruel stroke which laid his early dreams in the dust. He thought of Lucy Murray and of her tears—tears which fell singly in their force and bitterness like the words of Lilias; and he thanked God that rather thus the stroke had fallen upon his child. She was now doubly his child—left to him alone for care and succour—set apart from all the world.

But Lilias grew calm; there was no fever in the great stillness of this grief—no antagonist powers of hope and uncertainty to sicken her with its fretting painful life. She was fitted for her lot; and when she entered again the little world in which they lived, there was a saintly repose about her

mourning, a hush of deep melancholy in her atmosphere which subdued and mellowed all who approached her. But there was no elasticity left; the human hopes, the warm links which unite the living to the world they dwell in, had all been snapt for Lilias. Except the reverend duty of a child for the old man who mourned with her for the dead, she had no other bond to the world.

And so it happened that she came to stand, as we sometimes see the afflicted, alone upon the solitary isthmus between the earth and heaven. The changing tide of human life seemed to have left her there—above the reach of the benign and gentle hand of change—above the happy impatiences—the impulse and varying motive of the common lot; standing alone among the stars, waiting till her summons came.

She was very gentle, very mild, very calm

—but it was less sympathy than reverence that attended her. The human life had ebbed away from her lonely feet, and she grew feeble as she moved in her melancholy, shadowy grace about that old house of Mossgray. They tended her in silent pity as they might have tended a hermit spirit, and she repaid them as she could with her resigned and patient mildness; but they thought of her as one about to pass away, fated to another life than this of earth.

CHAPTER VIII.

I'm young and stout, my Marion,
Nane dances like me on the green,
And gin ye forsake me, Marion,
I'll e'en gae draw up wi' Jean.

SONG.

It was past midsummer. Halbert Graeme, younger of Mossgray was already a famous man in the country-side, and had not his gentle kinsman been more gravely occupied through that long, slow summer, we are not sure that the Laird

would have been quite satisfied with the considerable number of incipient flirtations which Halbert had on his hands. At Firthside, at Mount Fendie, and all neighbouring places where youthful people were, Halbert was immensely popular; and it was very true that Miss Georgina Maxwell and he had been experimenting a little upon each other; very true that Adelaide Fendie blushed her dull blush when her mischievous sister plied her with railleries touching the gallant Halbert. Adelaide was seventeen, and her large, soft, good-humoured face was not uncomely; besides she had begun to read greedily Maxwell Dickson's select and edifying collection of novels, and seventeen is quite the heroic age for young ladies of the Minerva Press. Adelaide thought it was full time that she should begin a private romance of her own.

And Halbert's letters to the North were by no means so frequent as they used to be. He was often very busy now, and really believed that he had not time to write; besides that, there had been a very pretty quarrel between him and the gentle Menie, provoked on her side by some saucy allusions to the Lilias whom he praised so much, and on his by some pique at a certain young Laird, who began to bulk very largely in the Aberdeenshire glen.

It was the market-day in Fendie, and Halbert now attended the markets, where both buyers and sellers had learned to know the young Laird of Mossgray. These groups of rustical people—strong, tall, red-whiskered men, with their immense stooping shoulders, and primitive blue coats and universal gray plaids, worn in this brilliant June weather to keep out the heat,

as in January they kept out the cold, whom you see stalking about the Main Street, with long deliberate steps, lifting their feet high, so that you fancy they must believe themselves still wading among the heather, acknowledged his acquaintance by grasping the rusty brim of the unbrushed hat as he passed them. More dignified, the lounging farmers in their short coats of gray plaiden, gathered in knots about the door of the inn where their stout poneys and comfortable gigs had been put up, held erudite conversation, with young Mossgray on the markets, the weather, and the "craps." He was perfectly at home among them; had they been Ojibbeway Indians, the result would have been quite the same. He was born to make friends anywhere, this brisk cosmopolitan Halbert.

He had just been at the post-office, and

was carrying home with him the letters of the household. There was one for himself, directed in the large, stiff handwriting of his old teacher: but Halbert was not so anxious about Mr. Monikie's letter as he would once have been; he put it coolly into his pocket till his market business should be over.

At last, having discussed all the momentous subjects of the day, ascertained all the prices, and recognized all his acquaintances, Halbert felt that his duty was done, and that he might return home. But he had only opened the seal of Mr. Monikie's despatch, with its agreeable odour of black rappee, and ascertained that it contained no enclosure from Menie, when he heard the clatter of John Brown's light cart on the road behind him. Halbert closed the letter again; it was by no means of pressing

interest; at the moment he preferred a chat with John.

"Fine weather this," said the young Laird.

"Ay, its weel eneuch," said John Brown, examining the sky with the curious eye of a connoisseur, "but ower drouthy, Sir—ower drouthy; and ower muckle drouth is guid for neither beast or body, let alane the craps. Yon muckle park at Shortrigg will be burnt brown afore the July rain, and syne it'll be as wat as a peat moss; ye'll never be dune, Sir, noo ye hae ta'en up the farming trade—ye'll never be dune battling wi' the weather."

Halbert laughed.

"I am not so warlike, John. I shall be content with the rain when it comes. Are they all well at the Mount—Mrs. Fendie and the young ladies?"

"Middling, middling," said John Brown;

"we have our bits of touts noo and then, but we're no to compleen o'; and the noo, we've nae time to think o' being no weel, for Mr. Alick's coming hame."

"Indeed!" said Halbert; the news interested him. "When does Mrs. Fendie expect him, John?"

"I hear about the harvest—August or September," said the factotum of Mount Fendie; "but we're gaun to gar the haill countryside stand about, so we've begoud in time. But ye'll mind he's no a free-spoken, pleasant lad like yourself, Mr. Graeme, begging your pardon for the freedom; he's ane o' your fleeaway sodger officers, and there's mair o' the same kind coming wi' him."

Halbert enjoyed his popularity; but at the same time he became still more interested in Alick Fendie who being less popu-

lar, promised to be more aristocratic than himself.

"Has he been long in India, John?" asked Halbert.

"Na, no that lang. I mind him mysel frae he was a kittlin o' a laddie like that wee evil spirit o' a brither o' his. He's been twa—three years out bye yonder," and John jerked his pondrous thumb in the direction of the sea. "I wad just like to see him fechting—or the like o' him—fusionless, shilpit laddies. I'm no Wallace Wight myself, but if I couldna tak twa o' them in ilka hand!—and that minds me, Mr Graeme, that my auntie Eesabell up at Murrayshaugh, bothers folk even on about your young lady. I'm no meaning the lady that is to be ye ken, but just Miss Maxwell. Our auld auntie's taen a notion that she

kens some o' the auld family—the Murrays. Its a' havers, ye ken, for Miss Lucy's aulder if she's leeving, than Esabell hersel; but the young lady hasna been at Murrayshaugh for lang, and the auld wife deaves a'body asking about her. I tell't her it was said in the town that Miss Maxwell was no weel. She's aye been awfu' delicate like; isna she no weel, Mr. Graeme?"

"She has been very ill," said Halbert; "but she is recovering now, I hope. She lost a friend lately."

John Brown paused respectfully, rendering the instinctive homage which men pay to grief.

"I saw Robbie Caryl the day," said John after an interval, "Robbie was in last week wi' some grand salmon at Dumbraes market, and he saw a man there that has a son a sodger, somegate near where Mr. Alick is;

and there's word—sure word Robbie says—that Peter Delvie—ye wadna ken Peter? was killed yonder wi' a wheen mair, fechting wi' thae wild Indians—Affghans—what ist they ca' them? Onyway Peter's dead; and what the auld man, Saunders, will say till't, noo, is mair than I ken."

"He was harsh to him, I believe," said Halbert."

"Ay, ye may say that; but I'm no sae sure that he aye meant it; ye see he was proud o' the lad, and when he gaed an ill gate, Saunders nigh broke his heart. Ye wad maist say he had nae heart, yon hard auld man—but it's ill telling. Robbie was gaun to the minister to get him to break it to Saunders. *I* wadna do't for a' Fendie."

The roads to Mossgray and the Mount separated at this point. Whistling gaily, John Brown set off at considerable speed, to

make up for the gossiping slow pace with which he had begun; and Halbert leaped over the style, and again opened the letter of Mr. Monikie.

It was a startling letter; the young man's face flushed with the angry colour of mortification and wounded pride, as he read it:

"I hear from Menie," wrote the pragmatical man of Aberdeen, "that you are not so good friends as you might be; and you know how often I have warned you, Halbert, about the danger of an unstable temper; a weakness to which I have always seen you were liable. It is a bad sign of a lad like you—a great evil—to have an unsteady mind, and to meditate breaking lightly the ties you have yourself made. Even as it regarded only yourself, I would have

thought it my duty to impress your infirmity upon you, but far more when it endangers the comfort of a girl like my Menie. It disappoints me, Halbert; I confess that though I might know better, after my long experience as a teacher of youth I had expected other things from you; but human nature, even with all advantages, and when its judgment is matured like mine, is prone to vain expectations, and you have disappointed me.

"I do not think I would be justified in trusting the happiness of a good girl like Menie, in hands that want the firmness which is needful in my eyes to a manly character. I hoped you had more of it, Halbert; and Menie herself, like a dutiful child as she has always been, agrees with her father, and says she thinks you will be very glad to be free, and at liberty to form

new engagements. Also Menie sends a message that she forgives you, and has given to me the half of the coin you broke with her ; a very foolish, superstitious, and heathenish ceremony, which I should have certainly condemned had I known of it, or could I have fancied that my daughter and my pupil would ever think of so foolish a thing.

" Young John Keith of Blackdean is giving us much of his company, and helps to keep up our spirits, otherwise we might have felt your backsliding even more than we do. I have never seen the marks of instability in him that I used to lament in you, though he has not had the same advantages of education ; indeed in every way I have reason to be pleased with him, and so has Mrs. Monikie and Menie. If Menie settles near

us it will be a great satisfaction, and I think it is not unlikely.

"I hope you will learn to correct these faults which I have pointed out to you, and we will always be glad to see you here, in spite of what has passed. I trust I can forgive any injury, especially when it has been made an instrument of good; and if you hear of any changes in my family, I hope you will be able to think of them without any great disappointment, seeing that I always remain, with compassion upon the errors of your youth,

"Your sincere friend,

"MATTHEW MONIKIE."

Halbert was very red, very angry; he folded up the letter bitterly, and felt indignant at treatment so unjust. His first

flash of jealous resolution was to start for Aberdeenshire immediately, and carry off the faithless Menie from his supplanter the Laird of Blackdean. The merry, pretty Menie! He had been getting rather indifferent, there was no denying that; but now when he had lost her, tender recollections of his first love returned to the honest heart of Halbert. Something swelled in his breast of that sad disappointment with which youthful people see the first tie of their own forming rudely snapt asunder. One or two tears rose into his eyes; the petulant, fickle Menie was victor over him.

But Halbert was not long melancholy. He began to think of the injustice—the insult.

"It is very well for herself; she has only taken the first word of flyting; she was

wise," muttered the angry Halbert, as he turned on his heel, and with a quick, impatient step went on to Mossgray; and so he salved his wounded pride and consoled himself, not without a pleasurable consciousness, increasing as he grew familiar with the idea, that he was free.

Lucy Murray and Adam Graeme had borne the first epidemic grief of youth on that waterside before him. This last example perfected the story of the others. The woman's sad endurance—the man's passionate pain—these were not types broad enough for universal humanity. Only a few here and there can feel as they did, but Halbert's lighter emotions were of the common stock; the momentary melancholy —the sting of mortification—the buoyance of new life and freedom. Lightly the cloud passed over the head of Halbert, a thing to

be laughed at by and by; for he had no ideal to be sacrificed. And so he completed the tale of youthful disappointments; he brought them into the ordinary level, the common stream of life.

In the kitchen of Mossgray Robbie Caryl the fisherman stood in grave and earnest conversation with the old housekeeper and her niece. Neither cuddie nor creels were visible to-day, and Robbie himself wore his Sabbath-day's well-preserved suit, and his Sabbath-day's look of gravity.

"Eh, Robbie!" exclaimed Mrs. Mense, "it's a judgment—it's just a visible judgment and retribution on that hard auld man! As if we werena sinfu' enough oursels to learn us mercy to our neighbours, let alane our ain bairns, bane of our bane, and flesh of our flesh."

"The minister says we maun hae sure

word afore we tell Saunders," said Robbie; "as if the word we hae gotten wasna ower sure; but I say we've nae richt to keep the news frae the faither and the mother. They hae mair richt to ken than fremd folk. To be sure, I gied my word to the minister that I wad tell naebody. I'm saying, Jen, mind; till ance the minister maks his inquiries, ye're no' to say a word about it; though I kenna but what it wad be richt to tell the auld man, whether it turned out true or no, just to bring him to himsel'."

"Eh, preserve me!" said Janet Mense, "they say he put his curse upon the lad."

"I wadna say onything was ower hard for Saunders Delvie," said the fisherman.

"Whisht! nane o' ye ken," said the old woman. "If he had been mair moderate in his liking, he wad hae been mair

moderate in his wrath. I tell ye, nane o' ye ken. Wha's yon, Jen? is't no' Saunders, his ain sel'?"

The fisherman glanced eagerly out, and then drew back.

"I pat on my Sabbath-day's claes just for the purpose, but I canna face him now I'll slip awa into the milk-house, Mrs. Mense; and say naething to him. It's in the minister's hands; we maun just leave it to the minister."

So saying, Robbie with some trepidation hastened away to conceal himself in the dairy until the old man had past.

The stern, harsh face of Saunders Delvie was lighted with a fire of strange and wild excitement. Defiance and yearning, tears and frowns, were strangely mingled in it. His voice shook, his grey eyelashes were wet, and under his heavy, bushy eyebrows

his eyes shot out glances of fiery grief. His stern composure of manner was entirely broken. A burst of weeping, or a paroxysm of fierce rage, might, either of them, have brought to a climax the old man's unusual agitation. With his heavy, quick, unsteady step, he came into the kitchen of Mossgray. No one spoke to him, for both of the women were afraid.

Mrs. Mense was sitting in her chair by the fireside; he went up to her hurriedly.

"Auld friend," he said abruptly, with that harsh tremor in his voice, more moving than many lamentations, "ken ye onything that concerns me or mine? tell me plain out what it is, for this I wunna bear."

"Oh, Saunders," exclaimed the old woman, wiping the tears from her withered cheek, "have pity upon the lad—the puir lad!"

"Is that a'? have ye nae mair to say but that?" said Saunders. Janet had followed the example of the fisherman, and the two old servants of Mossgray were alone. "Is that a'?" repeated Saunders, speaking rapidly as if in the contradictory impulse of his anxiety, he wished to prevent her from answering. "Ye're sure that's a'? Then I maun gang my ways—I maun tak counsel; if it's righteous it maunna be ower late; but I'll no' speak to the Laird. He's no' a man like me; he taks the reprobate and the race o' the reprobate into his bosom. Na, I winna speak to the Laird."

And lifting his head again with something of his usual rigid pride, the old man went away, as hastily as he had entered.

The market was over in Fendie, and as the summer afternoon drowsily waned,

and the weekly stir subsided, Mr. Oswald sat in his little private office alone. The banker was an elder of the Church, and a man, as Saunders thought, of kindred mind and temperament to his own. It was from him that he came to seek counsel.

Mr. Oswald looked up in some astonishment as the old man was ushered into his *sanctum*.

"It's a case of conscience, Sir," said Saunders, in his harsh, tremulous voice. "I was wanting to ask your counsel."

Mr. Oswald was a little startled. Cases of conscience were not quite in his way, although he had the ordination of the eldership upon him.

"Had you not better speak to the minister, Saunders?" he said; "but sit down, and tell me what troubles you."

The banker's heart was touched with the trembling vehemence of the old man's manner and appearance as he stood before him.

"Na, Sir, I canna speak to the minister," said Saunders. "The minister's a young man, and doesna ken the afflictions of the like o' me. He may hae comfort for his ain kind, but the griefs o' the grey head are aboon the ken o' lads like him. I canna speak to the minister."

Mr. Oswald had heard the rumour of Peter Delvie's death, and pitied the stern old father; again he asked him to sit down.

Saunders took the offered seat, and pressed his bonnet convulsively between his hands.

"It's touching the lawfulness of a vow—a vow before the Lord."

Mr. Oswald's voice faltered a little; an indefinite thrill of conscience moved him.

"What is it, Saunders?"

"I made a resolve," said the old man, his features twitching, and his strong, harsh voice shaking with the very force of his determination to steady it, "to put forth ane —ane that had sinned—out from my house as an alien and a reprobate. He had shamed the name that righteous puir men had laboured to keep honest for him—he had sinned in the sight of God and man; and before the Lord I pat him forth, and took a vow on me that he should cross my doorstane never mair. Maister Oswald, ye're an elder of the Kirk, and a man of years, and ane that has had bairns born to ye, and ken—am I no' bound before the Lord to haud to my vow?"

Mr. Oswald moved upon his chair uneasily. He could not answer.

"I have had converse with Mossgray," continued Saunders, shrill tones of excitement mingling with the usual slow, grave accents of his broken voice, "but Mossgray is anither manner of man, and kensna—kensna the like o' me. He tells me that change is a guid gift of God, given for our using like ither providences, and that what I have said wi' my lips may be broken, and me no mansworn—but I say, no—I ken nae law ither than the auld law of scripture, and I maun perform to the Lord my vow. Sir, Mr. Oswald, think ye not so?"

The old man's shaggy eyelash was wet, but the fire shot forth behind. Strongly the two contending powers within him struggled for the mastery. He wanted his

authority to second the dictates of the yearning nature, which moved by whispers of some unknown calamity to his son, contended bitterly with the stern obstinacy of his temper, and his sense of right; yet he had entered upon the oft-repeated arguments, with which he had been used to defend himself against the gentle attacks of Mossgray, and was becoming heated in his own defence. If the banker had pronounced his judgment against the breaking of this vow, it would have carried a bitter pang to the old man's heart, and yet would have been a triumph. He sat, pressing his bonnet in his hard hands, and shaking like a palsied man. He had put his fate on this chance. He had resolved to make the judgment of the other pertinacious man to whom he appealed, his final rule, and anxiously he waited for the decision.

But George Oswald moving there uneasily in his elbow chair was too much perplexed and conscience-stricken to give a ready answer. The vehement father-love of Saunders Delvie, which in its agony of disappointed hope produced this vow, sublimed the old man's sternness and lifted it out of the class of ordinary emotions. It was not anger, or wounded pride, or shame alone, but it was all these, intensified and burning with the strong, bitter love which still worshipped in its secret heart, the son whom it had expelled from his home. The worldly man who had put the barrier of his disapproval in the way of *his* son's happiness, for such paltry motives as Saunders Delvie never knew, felt himself abashed in presence of the old, stern peasant, whose appealing eye was upon him.

"Saunders," said Mr. Oswald with a

faltering voice, "we are bound at all times to forgive."

"It's no that I dinna forgive him," cried the old man in his passion. "It's no that I dinna think upon him night and day—it's no that—oh man! do ye no ken?"

And Saunders, forgetting all artificial respectfulness, put down his grey head into his hard toil-worn hands and sobbed aloud—such strong convulsive sobs as the awed banker had never heard before.

Hope Oswald had opened the door very quietly to look in, and the instincts of childhood were scarcely yet subdued in the young heart of the banker's daughter. She came softly across the room to stand by Saunders' side, and touch his hand with awe and pity.

"Saunders," whispered Hope, "maybe it is not true—the minister says it is not true."

The old man lifted his face; no face less stern could have been moved so greatly.

"What is't that's no true?"

"Poor Peter!" said Hope with tears upon her cheek, "do you mind how good he aye was, Saunders? and his heart broke, people say, because you were angry at him; but you are not angry now; and when he comes back you will go out to meet him like the man in the Bible, and be friends? for, Saunders, you are friends with Peter now?"

He could not wait for any judgment; he could not think of any vow. A burst of weeping, such as might have hailed the prodigal's return followed the simple speech of Hope. The living love within him burst through its perverse and unseemly garments; and those peaceful walls, unused to great emotion, had never heard such a cry as

broke through them now, from lips that trembled as the great king's did of old, when he too wept for his Absalom. "My son! my son!"

CHAPTER IX.

"I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars."

BURNS.

"Oh, Hope, Alick's come," exclaimed Adelaide Fendie, one bright August day, as she alighted from the nondescript gig driven by John Brown, and went with her arm linked in her friend's, into the banker's sober dining-room. "Mamma is so glad—we're all so glad—Alick's come."

"And, Hope," added Victoria, "somebody else is come too. It's the sword and cocked

hat that Tibbie saw at Hallowe'en. Oh, Hope, if you only saw him!"

"Who is it, Adelaide?" asked Hope.

"It's—Alick's come," said the slow Adelaide with her dull blush, "mamma is so glad, Hope; and we're to have a ball and parties—I don't know how many—and Mossgray and young Mr. Graeme are coming to dine to-morrow, and next week we are going to Mossgray—because Miss Maxwell will never go out anywhere now you know, and Mr. Graeme wants to have Alick and me," added Adelaide with a dignified consciousness of having reached the full years of young ladyhood. "I'm to go too."

"Will Mossgray ask you, Hope?" inquired Victoria.

"Hope is too young," said Adelaide in her new dignity. "Doesn't mamma tell you, Victoria, not to talk about things you

don't understand? but though you're too young to go out to parties yet, Hope, you're to come up and see Alick: and there's Alick's friends too, you know."

Hope was offended. She was full fifteen, and thought herself a very mature womanly person, so she condescended to ask no further questions about Alick's friends, though Victoria's malicious laugh, and the dull consciousness of Adelaide made Hope a little curious; but Hope's mind was occupied with things of very much more importance than cocked hats or swords.

"Adelaide, does Alick know about Peter Delvie? oh, Mr. Insches says perhaps it is not true—and poor Saunders!—does Alick know anything, Adelaide; does Alick think it is true?"

"Hope! do you think our Alick knows anything about Peter Delvie?"

"If he does not it is very bad of him," said Hope boldly; "for Peter is a Fendie man—they were both Fendie men away in yon great India; but did you not ask him, Adelaide? did you not think of poor Saunders when Alick came home?"

"I forgot, Hope," said Adelaide more humbly.

"Will you not forget to-day then? will *you* mind, Victoria? and I will come up to the Mount to-morrow to hear; for Saunders thinks he is dead; oh, Adelaide, if he only were living to come back again!"

Hope had never been able to forget the agony of the old man; but her visitors were by no means interested.

"Do you mind Alick, Hope?" said Adelaide, "mamma says he is so improved; and he's as brown as he can be, with the sun; and then there is Captain Hyde,

Alick's friend; he is an Englishman, and belongs to such an old family. They came in with the Conqueror."

"And they called them Van Dunder at first," said the malicious Victoria, "and then they were married to a Miss Hyde a rich lady: and now their full name is Dunder Hyde; but Alick says it should be Dunderhead because he's so stupid."

"Victoria, I'll tell mamma," said the offended Adelaide.

"But Van Dunder is not like a Norman name," said Hope who was more erudite; "it's like Dutch: are you sure they were Normans, Adelaide?"

"I don't know anything about Normans," said Adelaide with dignity; "but I know that Captain Hyde's family came to England with King William; for he told me that—"

"But that would be Dutch William," said

the historical Hope; "and does he wear a sword and a cocked hat? and do you like him, Adelaide?"

Adelaide drew herself up.

"Hope! what are you thinking of!"

"What is the matter," said the straightforward Hope; "would it be wrong if you liked him? I am sure I like Halbert Graeme very well, and perhaps I will like Alick; but I like old Mossgray far better; and I wouldn't be afraid to say it."

"Young ladies should not speak so," said Adelaide in her dull solemnity.

Hope was very innocent:—she still thought of a young lady only as an ordinary mortal, and not as a professional person—for Hope, schemer and matchmaker as she was, had never been initiated into the system of mutual silliness with which boys and girls, just before they become men and women,

surround each other; and although perfectly undefended from the romantic, and prone to be overpowered by it, whenever her hour should come, she had triple armour in her honest, artless temper, against all the affectations of the young lady and young gentleman period.

"Has Alick ever been in a battle?" inquired Hope with some awe.

"Oh, Hope, so many! Alick does not care about battles now," said Adelaide; "if you only heard Captain Hyde, and him!"

"I wonder if he ever killed anybody," said Hope with a shudder. "I wonder if he ever took away a man's life—maybe somebody's son, Adelaide, like poor Peter Delvie—or like the gentleman—"

"What gentleman, Hope?"

"I mean somebody I heard of," said Hope, prudently checking herself, as she

remembered that what she knew of the bereavement of Lilias was not fit news for her gossiping companions; "but to take away a life, Adelaide—I think it must be very terrible."

"I don't know, Hope," said the stolid Adelaide; "but Alick has been in so many battles that he does not care for them now—and so has Captain Hyde."

"And will you mind, Adelaide," said Hope, as she saw them again safely deposited in the gig, under the care of John Brown, "will you be sure to ask about Peter Delvie?—and I'll come up to-morrow to hear."

Adelaide promised, and they returned home; but the promise faded from Adelaide's memory before they were half-way to Mount Fendie; and when the faithful Hope went up to the Mount next day to

ascertain the result of her friend's inquiries, there was much to be said about Captain Hyde, but nothing of the hapless Peter. The strangers were out. Hope did not see them —and she had to go away, contenting herself with another promise which was in like manner broken.

Peter Delvie was an early friend of Hope's. He had helped her over burns, and comforted her when stung by the nettles and pricked by the thorns of juvenile mischance—had pulled brambles for her from inaccessible hedgerows and fished unattainable water-lilies to her feet. Hope remembered all his gentle deeds, and liked the unfortunate Peter. And Saunders, in rigid, hopeless misery, was condemning himself as the murderer of his son; the old man's stern grief moved the young heart strangely. Hope would have endeavoured any exertion

to bring comfort to the harsh, agonized, despairing heart.

A second disconsolate journey Hope had made to Mount Fendie; but Adelaide still forgot; and wearily, with something of the discontent and melancholy which elder people feel, in sight of the indifference and lack of sympathy displayed by the common herd, Hope was returning home.

She had entered the garden of Mossgray before she became aware that there were visitors in it. Under shadow of a fine beech tree, Lilias, in her mourning dress, sat on a garden seat. It was Saturday, and those holidays were now very frequently spent by Helen Buchanan with her pensive and delicate friend whose health needed all gentle care and tendance. Helen was standing behind Lilias, looking shy and something out of place, as she bent over the downcast Lily of

Mossgray, and tried to shield her from the remarks sometimes addressed to her by the young men who stood with the Laird and Halbert at a little distance. The strangers were Alick Fendie, and the redoubtable Captain Hyde; Hope did not know them—she came up, stealing under cover of the trees, to Lilias and Helen.

Lilias had turned her head away, where no one could see the drooping, melancholy face. They had been talking in her presence of those fatal Indian wars—had been running over, with careless levity, those names, made so bitterly memorable to her, of places where the dead had been. She had turned aside, with her trembling arm resting against the silvery beech, and Helen's eyes were cast down too, and no one saw what clouds were passing over the wan face of the Lily of Mossgray.

Hope did not think of that, as she advanced innocently to the mourner's side, and looked into her face; the tears were standing upon those colourless cheeks in large drops—the pale lips were quivering.

"Hope!" said Helen in reproof.

Lilias put her hand upon Hope's, gently detaining her.

"Hope has been my shield before," she said in her low, broken voice; and Hope's heart swelled with graver emotion than was wont to move it, as the drooping Lily leaned for a moment upon her shoulder. She remembered very well the other time—the bow window of Mrs. Fendie's morning-room and the first meeting of Mossgray with his ward; but Lilias was still paler, still more fragile now, and people said she would not dwell long in this life.

The young heir of Mount Fendie,

lieutenant in his regiment, but captain at home, was the model of his sister Victoria—malicious with a kind of pert cleverness, which passed muster for wit very well among the stupid Fendies; but Captain Hyde his butt and companion was much too complacent to be at all concious of being quizzed. In himself a tall fellow of his hands—in estate a considerable proprietor in one of the rich English counties on the other side of the island—the arrows of ridicule glanced innoxiously from off the glittering armour of good-humoured self-importance which bucklered Captain Arthur Hyde,

"Poor Robertson," said Alick Fendie in his loud voice, as Hope began to listen. "He was killed in that skirmish at ——; but, by the bye, don't you remember hearing a rumour before we left India, Hyde, that

all these poor fellows were not killed after all?"

Captain Hyde gaped a "never heard it."

"I am sure you did," responded his brisk companion. "Why, man, don't you recollect? Somebody's servant had turned up, and reported that himself and his master were not dead—very near it—very badly wounded, but not killed outright, and that the Affghan fellows were nursing a lot of them—I think there was a lot; and the fellows who had taken them were just about to turn their coat; they are always doing that, these wretches of natives, and were taking care of them to curry favour with us; yes, to be sure we heard it. It was a mere rumour, you know, but it might be true. Anything may happen in India. Men get

killed and then turn up again in the most miraculous way—eh, Hyde?"

Lilias had risen and turned round blindly to Helen, as if seeking support.

"Save me, Helen," said the Lily of Mossgray, "save me from this hope."

"And is that all? do you know nothing further about these unfortunate young men?" said the anxious voice of Mossgray.

"Nothing at all," answered Alick Fendie briskly. "It may not be worthy of the least credit what we did hear. I only give it you as a rumour."

"Lilias is ill; we will go in," said Helen, supporting her friend on the nervous, firm arm, which began to tremble in sympathetic sorrow. "Will you come to us when you can, Mossgray? Lilias is ill."

And Lilias was ill. After this long sinking

in the deep waters of grief, the fever of hope was too much for her. Large, cold drops stood upon her white, shadowy forehead, her thin, wasted frame was shaken with sudden pains, the mist of blindness was upon her eyes, and the slender arm twined in Helen's leaned so heavily—you could not have fancied there was so much weight in the slight, drooping figure altogether as there was in that one thin arm.

"And, Captain Alick," said Hope, stepping forward bravely, "did you see Peter Delvie in India? They have sent home word that he is dead; do you think Peter is dead?"

"Why, I believe this is little Hope Oswald," exclaimed Captain Alick, shaking Hope's hand energetically, and offering a salutation from which Hope, immensely red and angry, withdrew in high disdain. "Why,

Hope, you are taller than Adelaide; and what a little thing you were when I went away."

"Will you tell me about Peter Delvie, Captain Fendie?" said Hope, with some dignity.

"Who is Peter Delvie, Hope? I never saw him in India, I assure you. But why do you never come to the Mount? I must come and see you myself one of these days."

Hope went away dissatisfied and sad. Nobody would care except for themselves, nobody would attend to her inquiries, nobody would think of the old man who had lost his only child.

Lilias was sitting on a low chair, bending her head down upon her knees, as Mossgray looked in at the door of their usual sitting-room. Her face was hidden in her hands; she did not see him.

Helen stood close beside her, holding one of those feverish, hot hands.

"Helen, it is very hard to bear," said the broken Lily, "very terrible. I thought I was patient, I thought I had learned to endure; but this hope, this false, vain hope—I cannot bear it, Helen."

Helen answered nothing; she only pressed gently the thin, trembling fingers which lay in her own.

"And if it was true," said Lilias, "they were many, very many; would you have me hope that it was *him*—that *he* was saved alone?"

And then the wan face was lifted, supplicating, begging to be contradicted—instinct with its woeful entreaty that this hope which it called false might be pronounced true.

"Will you not speak to me!" said poor

Lilias. "Have you nothing to say to me, Helen?"

"I cannot tell," said the faltering voice of Helen. "I have heard of very wonderful things; this may be one of them. What can I say, Lilias? There have been such deliverances before—I cannot tell."

Lilias rose up suddenly, and laid her arms upon Helen's shoulders, supporting herself there.

"He is the only son of his mother. She would pray for him night and day. Helen, Helen, there are few so blessed. Would they not be heard in heaven, those prayers?"

Poor Helen trembled as much in her strength as the other did in her weakness; she dared not recommend this hope to the sick heart, which had already grasped it so strongly.

"We must wait, Lilias," she said. "It is very hard, very hard to do it, I know, but it is in God's hands, and we must wait."

Lilias put up her hands to her head; she staggered as she withdrew from her support. A sickly smile came upon her face.

"I ought to go to his mother, Helen. Will you come with me to seek his mother? Mossgray is very good, very kind, but she has more need of me. She has not written, because she would think, like me, that he was dead; but it may be true. You have heard of very wonderful deliverances. You said so, Helen; you thought it might be true."

But Helen's head drooped. She feared to encourage the expectation.

Lilias sat down upon her low chair again,

and again bent her head upon her knees; her feeble frame was distracted with bodily pains no less than her mind was with mental.

"I think my head is dizzy, Helen," she said, in her melancholy, broken voice. "I think I am forgetting myself—for this is only vain and false, a mockery of hope. I see it is. If the grief were yours, Helen, you would see that this could not be true."

Those strange artifices of misery! they brought tears to the eyes of the looker-on, to whom this did indeed seem a mockery of hope.

"You must stay with her, Helen," said Mossgray, when they had left Lilias alone. "You must stay with her till I return. I cannot leave Fendie to-night, but to-morrow evening I will. I will go to London, and

ascertain at once if there is any truth in this. Do not let Lilias know where I am nor what is my errand. I leave her with you in all confidence, Helen. You will be tender of my poor Lily."

CHAPTER X.

I do not hope—ah, no!—mine eyes are clear,
I see it would be vain; perchance, perchance,
Some other heart doth hope and will be blessed;
But mine—why should this gladness come to mine?
I have been used with grief;
A sombre way has mine been, all my days,
And yet perchance—oh, Heaven, such things might be!
As that one giant joy should come to me,
Eclipsing common joys.

OLD PLAY.

"HELEN," said Lilias, do you think I am very weak?"

They were sitting alone together on the

morning of the third day after Mossgray's departure. It was early, and Helen was just preparing to return to the daily labours which she could not intermit.

"I think you have had great trouble, Lilias, and you are not strong; but why do you ask me?"

"Helen," said the pale Lilias, "do you never think it is selfish to sink under this blow as I have done? I think it has sometimes come into your mind; *you* would not have done it, Helen?"

"We are not alike," said Helen, hurriedly. "I think I should have rebelled, I should have repined. I should have been like the Leonore of that ghastly ballad; but I have my daily work to battle with, and little cares and little humiliations to teach me patience—yet I will never be so patient as you are, Lilias."

"It is because I am alone, Helen," said Lilias, in her faint, pleading tone of self-defeance, "because there is no one in the world, not one, to whom I am the best beloved. If I had been like you—if my mother had lived—I think I should have been brave, Helen; but now I have only my grief, nothing more, in all this cold world."

"And Mossgray, Lilias," said Helen.

"I am very ungrateful," said Lilias, bending her head. "I wanted you to think that I was not selfish, Helen; and yet to lose them all—to lose them both in one year, it is very bitter, very hard; you cannot tell how hard it is."

She was very pale, though perfectly composed; but now as she paused, a red light seemed to flash across her face for a moment, the flicker of that unnatural,

feverish hope which she fancied she had tried to quench, but which, instead, was gathering strength every hour, and lighting up her heart with an unnatural radiance.

"I wish you could work as I have to do, Lilias," said Helen, as she drew her homely shawl about her. "I think it would be good medicine if you were strong enough. If we could only change, if you could fight a little as it is natural for me, and I could be patient as you are; but we must be content. I am going out now to my little battle-ground; there are some struggles and bitternesses in it, you know; will you try to-day to think how important you are to all of us—to us all here, Lilias, and to let the sun come in upon you?"

"These long days!" said Lilias. "I am not patient, Helen. I think they will never

come to an end. Will you bring some of the children with you? Hope Oswald—any of them. I like to see the children; and we will try to-night to forget—to forget," said Lilias, with the flickering red light upon her face again, "not the sorrow, but the hope."

The feverish hope which had so frail a foundation to build its airy fabric on—what was it that wakened out of the gentle passive depths of Lilias's mind the feeling that her sinking calm of grief was wrong, and that there was need to exert herself to cast it off? It was not reason, it was not thought; it was a new hysteric strength, other than comes from the deliberated wisdoms of man; a fluttering meteoric light, springing up about her, dangerously exciting, desperate, wild. She said she would forget it; she did not know that it

was the fairy strength of this hope inspiring her, which made it possible that she should forget.

And while Lilias began to move about the house in the new strength, which, she fancied, arose from a resolve to exert herself and show her gratitude to her friends, Helen went quickly down the water-side to her daily labour. Her quick, nervous tell-tale motions seemed to have been subdued in presence of the mourner, and her face looked paler and quieter than was its wont. That varying temperament of hers, had a strange facility of catching the tone of the atmosphere in which she was, and wearing it unconsciously as the sky wears the clouds. The happy good-morrow twitterings—not songs—of the birds among the dewy glistening leaves confused the stronger voice of the wan water, and filled all the fresh morning

air, with inarticulate music—cheerful sounds came through the intervening trees from Fendie. Children, yonder, on the highroad began to flock out of the cottage doors to school. Scarcely any heart could refuse to rise with the buoyant upspringing new day; but along the green, soft path, and through this plain of long waving grass by the side of the bridge, Helen Buchanan went quietly with a dimness on her face.

She had cares and bitternesses enough, as she said. William Oswald was still in Edinburgh; he had not been home even for a day; but the Reverend Robert had learned with inexpressible surprise and considerable pain that the young school-mistress of Fendie did not choose to accept the dignified position to which he had elected her. It was almost the first rebuff he had met with since the triumphant beginning of his career, and he

was a mortal young man, though he was a minister, and felt the mortification of being rejected to its fullest extent. So the Reverend Robert concealed the disappointment of the true honest feelings which did him honour under a veil of pique and pride. He could not manage to be indifferent, yet in his manner, when he accidentally met her, and in his attempt at indifference, was almost rude to Helen. Her sensitive pride began to rise again in full tide; people had begun to notice her for the sake of the minister, who now believing as thoughtless malice said, that the minister had changed his mind and withdrawn in time, withdrew too, and marked the change: and Mrs. Buchanan's little quiet house fell into its old loneliness once more.

And the old weariness came sometimes back, and forlorn bitter thoughts swelled

sometimes again about the changing heart. It was the penalty she paid for her power to endure and to enjoy.

So she went to her usual labour and worked at it as she had worked for years; but other schools were rising in Fendie, where the little daughters of the masons and joiners and seamen of the good town could acquire a greater stock of accomplishments than Helen professed—where the fancy-work flourished in a perfect luxuriance of patterns, and the sober "whiteseam," which was poor Helen's staple, was thrust aside in disgrace. Helen was so foolish as to have an opinion on this subject; she had a good deal of wilfulness about her, it must confessed; she thought it an honourable craft for those small maidens of hers, the manufacture of garments for their various homes; but was

somewhat impatient of the tawdry prettinesses after which their ambition yearned.

It did her a little harm this weakness of aesthetical feeling; she thought of the natural fitness and propriety, and they gave her no thanks; and so it chanced that Helen got few new scholars. She felt the evils of competition; as her elder girls dropped off with their quota of education completed, younger ones did not come in to fill up the declining numbers, even when the young school-mistress having discovered her error began not very willingly to amend it. Mrs. Buchanan was beginning to look very sad and careworn; the steps of the coming wolf were already at the door.

The half year's rent would soon be due, and the mother and daughter, in their anxious consultations, could by no means

see where it was to come from. And the banker Oswald was their landlord; the gentle widow and the proud, sensitive Helen were at one in that point; there was nothing that they would not rather do than delay their payment by a single day.

Mrs. Buchanan's little portion was very attenuated now; the expenses of her husband's illness and death had nearly swallowed it up, and the remnant was in the form of bank shares; but the very meagre dividend which this little capital yielded yearly was not above half what was necessary for this dreaded rent. The good mother painfully hoarded the little stock of school-fees; painfully expended what was absolutely needed —and lay awake far into the night and started again before the sun was up, calculating that sad arithmetic which could not issue in anything but a failure—laboriously

trying to bring together the two ends which would not meet.

So Helen needed the natural spring and buoyant life of her temperament as much as Lilias did the gentle human touch of hope: their sorrows were apportioned to them by the same Hand which did so diversely create their spirits. Lilias had been very patient, until this wild light of hope broke in upon her still dead sorrow; and now Helen was bravely fighting against the cold incoming tide of neglect and poverty; holding up a high heart above the waves, and keeping as she could, unwetted by the chill spray about her, the wings of her strong life.

The banker Oswald was looking on; he had managed to ascertain so much of their need, and means, and mode of life as would have added bitterness to their struggle had

Mrs. Buchanan or her daughter known of it; and with singular interest and even some excitement, as he might have looked at a strong swimmer contending with the stronger current, the obstinate man looked on. To see these women battling so stoutly with a tide more powerful than that under which Walter Buchanan had sunk in his mid-day; to observe how Helen bore her fall from the temporary elevation which the minister's attentions had procured for her, and went upon her way alone in her own unconscious dignity, so open to all kindnesses, still, and with the frank, clear skies of youth constantly breaking through the clouds of injured pride —no thought of coming to the rescue entered the mind of the banker, but there were no two persons in Fendie, out of his own household, whom he observed with half the interest which fascinated him to these. He

fancied William had altogether forgotten the poor schoolmistress, and while he was entirely satisfied that such should be the case, a certain shade of contempt for this, obtruded itself into the pride with which he regarded the rising name of his son: but had William suddenly presented himself to ask the banker's consent, as he had done before, the answer would still have been the same; he was still determined, unchangeable, bound by the resolution which nothing should break—never!

"I do not know what to say to Lilias, mother," said Helen as in the afternoon she prepared to return to Mossgray where Mrs. Buchanan was to accompany her. "*You* will know—I cannot speak to her of this, for it would be terrible to lead her to hope, and then have that dreary blank of disappointment return again—and such disappointment! It is not like our troubles—troubles which

could be almost altogether removed by what would be a very little matter to Mossgray; but Lilias has a heavier burden than we have."

"The present trouble looks aye the hardest, Helen," said Mrs. Buchanan. "She is young, and has many friends—she will forget; but you must fight on, my poor bairn. I feel your trouble more than hers."

Helen could lament herself into despondency without much difficulty, but the perverse temperament would not droop for any will but its own.

"Hush, mother!" said Helen; "it is only a fight after all, and there is nothing so very bad in having to labour; I could not do without it, I think, and we will get through yet, no fear."

Mrs. Buchanan shook her head.

"I hope so, my dear—I hope we shall, Helen; but how we are to do at Martinmas, I cannot tell."

"The fear of ill exceeds the ill we fear," said Helen, with a bright face. "We will do all we can, mother, and we will manage someway—do not let us think of it to-night."

Mrs. Buchanan's heart did not rise as her daughter's did; but the good mother was ready to brighten too, lest those occasional gleams of sunshine, the sole solace of Helen's toiling life, should be overcast.

"When is Hope to come?" she asked, "and what made Lilias think of asking Hope, Helen?"

"She wanted to escape from her own thoughts—at least she said so, mother—she wanted to be prevented from dwelling upon her hopes and fears for this night; and the grown-up people, the young ladies and the young gentlemen, would have tormented rather than eased her. Poor Lilias! I think she has some idea of Mossgray's errand;

she has not asked much about him, but a step without makes her shiver, and at night she grows so anxious. You are used to nervous people, mother, but when Lilias is nervous—so calm as she naturally is—it is far more painful to see, I think, than any natural tremor. Are you ready? for there is Hope?"

Hope led by the hand a little white-frocked, blue-eyed girl, the little Mary Wood of whom she had spoken so much. Miss Swinton had remained only a day in Fendie, and to Hope's great disappointment, had not seen Helen; but the little Mary was left with Mrs. Oswald for a long visit. Hope was exceedingly fond and proud of the child, and eager to display its juvenile wisdom and attainments. They all set out together for Mossgray.

"My papa is in India," said little Mary Wood, sliding her small hand into the

trembling fingers of Lilias, as they sat under cover of the great beech, watching the autumn sun sink gorgeously over the western hill; "and when I am a big lady I'm to go to India too, and then I'm to be married to somebody—Miss Mansfield says so, Hope."

And Lilias laughed tremulously with the others, communicating a sick melancholy tone to the very sound of mirth.

"But Miss Mansfield says so, Miss Maxwell; and Miss Mansfield is a grown-up lady; she's bigger than Miss Buchanan—isn't she, Hope?"

"Never mind Miss Mansfield; nobody cares about her," said Hope; "but look, little Mary, look at yon star!—oh, Helen, look! in among the gold clouds, and it so white and cold like—I know what it's like."

"Oh! what is it like, Hope?" cried little Mary Wood, who had the greatest possible admiration of Hope's stories.

"It's like somebody—somebody like what folk are in books," said Hope, "standing in among the rich common people; it's far better than the clouds—it's as good as the sun, only it's not so great; but for all that, look at it, how it's shaking, and how pale it is; but it knows it is better than the clouds."

Little Mary looked up wonderingly in awe of Hope's occult acquaintance with the star; but this did not strike her as Hope's stories generally did; for she said, after a little pause:

"I wish it were to-morrow—I wish it were the day after to-morrow."

"Why, Mary?" said Lilias.

"Because Miss Swinton said papa was going to write me a letter, and that I would get it to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow. A whole big letter to myself—a letter from papa, all the way from India—oh, Miss Maxwell!"

Lilias trembled a little; a slight painful shiver, as if of cold. She remembered well the time so long marked and looked for.

"The night is getting chill," said Mrs. Buchanan; "I think we must go in now; and come and tell me, little Mary, about these great designs of yours."

"Mary is very little," said Hope, apologetically, taking the vacant place by the side of Lilias; "she says just what comes into her head, you know, Miss Maxwell."

"And do *you* not say what comes into your head, Hope?"

"But then I am not like Mary, Helen," said Hope, promptly; "I am fifteen—I know—at least I should know better than little Mary. Do you know when Mossgray is coming back, Miss Maxwell?"

Lilias shivered again. "No, Hope."

Poor Hope! she was not so very much wiser than little Mary, after all.

The harvest moon had risen; the night was considerably advanced; Mrs. Buchanan had set out with Hope and the child some time since; Helen and Lilias were alone.

They were sitting together in the deep recess of one of those old-fashioned windows, and the room was perfectly dark, save for the broad, full moonlight which made bars of silver light across the gloom. They were speaking in the hushed tone which people instinctively adopt at such times, and Helen was endeavouring to keep the attention of Lilias occupied, although her broken answers and unconnected words showed how ill she accomplished it, and frequent starts and intervals of listening evinced the anxiety of both.

"Let us have lights, Lilias," said Helen; "it is not good this—it will do you harm."

"Yes," said Lilias, vacantly—"I mean, wait a little—only wait a little, Helen."

She had repeated the excuse again and again, and now grasping her friend's arm with those tightened fingers, she bent her pale head in the full mellow moonlight, and listened, shivering with the chills and starts of expectation.

There was a slight noise below.

"There is some one coming, Helen," and the trembling fingers tightened in their eager grasp. "It is not Halbert—it must be Mossgray—hush!"

"It is only Janet moving below," said Helen.

"Hush—listen! it is Mossgray! but I dare not go to meet him. Stay with me, Helen—stay till he comes! Now—now—it will be over now!"

And speaking incoherent words of prayer, Lilias held her eager friend tight, so that she could not escape, and turned her own bowed head towards the door.

Lightly up the stair came the elastic footstep, and Mossgray opened the door gently, and stood before them in the grace of his old age, the moonbeams mingling with his white hair.

"Where are you?" said the old man, looking into the dark shadows of the room. "Helen, is she strong? can she bear joy?"

"Mossgray!"

"My good child, there are others in the world to guard your strength for. He is not strong himself, poor fellow! He has had wounds and sickness; but he lives to thank God, Lilias, as we do."

The room was reeling round her, with its heavy shadows, and bars of broad white light. She held firmly by the firm form of Helen, and laying down her dizzy head upon her friend's shoulder, closed her eyes. She resigned her strained faculties willingly—at present she did not crave more; the quietness

—the peace—fell over her like the moonlight —it was enough.

"Has she fainted, Helen?" asked Mossgray, anxiously, after a considerable pause.

Lilias lifted her head, still sick and dizzy, but with a sickness so different from that of grief.

"No, Mossgray, I am strong."

And so she was, though she wavered and staggered in the moonlight, and scarcely could stand without support as yet. The winds had spent themselves and past away; the unusual fever had fled in a moment, and in her quietness she was herself again. Already the quick, wild pulse had fallen into its usual gentle beating; the turbulent strength of joy was not hers, any more than the passionate might of grief; but in the great peace of her gladness Lilias was strong.

And then the old man told them his

tidings fully; how this very mail had brought home the certain news; how *he* did not survive alone, but various others, officers and men, shared his fancied loss, and sure restoration; how the wounded men on the field where the little band had been cut to pieces, were left to the tender mercies of an Affghan tribe, whose fierce chief had perished in the encounter; how the son of this rebel Rajah had been trained by a captive Englishman, long ago seized by the wandering banditti of the tribe, and knew of justices and generosities higher than are taught by the creed of Mahomet; how the young sovereign saw how vain the struggle was between his shifting, unstable countrymen and the steady British arms, and moved by policy alike, and friendliness, had caused gentle succour to be given to the helpless wounded British men who were within his power; how they had travelled to his capital,

and found his English tutor there, now, after long oppression and confinement, a free and honoured man, and how, with gifts and compliments, the strongest of the prisoners had been dismissed, and the brave young merchant, Grant, was to follow when he could.

Dim, dubious, inarticulate thoughts were rising in the old man's mind as he told this story, touching a long-past sorrow—a visionary hope of his own; but he gave them no utterance—and Lilias' face had not lost the flush with which she heard the name and its title—brave—when Mossgray placed a letter in her hand. Lilias was strong now; she hurried away to her own apartment with this crowning joy of all.

"I waited in Fendie till they should arrange their letters," said Mossgray, "that I might see if there was anything for Lilias, and I got what I desired, Helen. There are

other things in this story which interest me greatly. I wonder—but we shall hear, no doubt, when this young man comes home."

The letter was a very brief one, written while he was still scarcely able to hold the pen, as the unsteady characters bore witness, and only assuring her that he was safe and out of danger, and whenever his wounds permitted, would hasten home.

"Does he say nothing of—of the Englishman?" said Mossgray, anxiously, when Lilias came down to tell him.

But the letter said nothing of any Englishman; the writer had been too feeble to write anything but the few words which told his safety, and that he was carefully tended—"in good hands."

CHAPTER XI.

Open the lattice; let the fresh, soft air
Bear in sweet Nature's psalm;
Draw the dim curtain quick—the sun is there,
Holy and bright and calm—
And here a heart trembles for very gladness,
Which yesternight fainted twixt hope and sadness.

When Lilias awoke next morning, her heavy black dress was nowhere to be found. It had been put away out of sight, and a light muslin one was laid in its place. The Lily of Mossgray put on the happier garment with reverence, murmuring to herself psalms of thanksgiving. She had wakened so often to the blank of hopeless grief, that

she felt now a solemn gravity in this new beginning of life; it seemed to her like the visible interposition of the Divine Hand—a miracle of joy.

The blinds had been drawn up, and the morning sun looked brightly into the room. These little imaginative attentions could be rendered only by Helen, but Helen had left the room before Lilias awoke from the long, happy sleep of her new peace.

In a room below Helen stood beside the old housekeeper. A great pile of white linen lay on the table before them, and Mrs. Mense was exhausting herself in its praise.

"Na, if ye had Mossgray's ain muckle spyglass that sits up the stair at the study window, ye could scarce count the threads," said the old woman triumphantly; "it's that fine; and ye see, Miss Buchanan, Mr. Halbert's no' what ye could ca' weel supplied,

coming out from amang fremd folk, ye ken. I've been wanting to see about getting them made this lang time, only I didna like to fash the young lady; but Mossgray says I may speak to her noo. Do ye think I may speak to Miss Lilias noo, and no fash her, Miss Buchanan?"

"What is it, Mrs. Mense?" said Lilias, coming forward with a peaceful light upon her face which could not be misapprehended. The old woman glanced at her changed dress and brightened.

"Ye see, Miss Lillie, it's just the new linen. I dinna think ye ever lookit at it before; is't no' beautiful? And I was just thinking we should hae it made. Ye see, Mr. Halbert he hasna ower mony, and to be ploutering and washing ance in a fortnight like common folk disna do for the like o' us; and ye micht get some yoursel', Miss Lillie; some o' the new fashioned kind wi'

the frills, for it's a muckle web, and it wad be a guid turn to somebody, the making o' them."

Helen was twisting a corner of the linen nervously in her fingers.

"I think I could get some one to do it for you, Lilias, if you could trust me," she said.

"And you're just the best to ken, Miss Buchanan," said Mrs. Mense, "for ye see Miss Lillie has nae friend to speak o' but yoursel', and it's no like she could ken wha sewed weel, and wha didna; but I'm just as blythe as I can be, Miss Lillie, to see you wi' your light gown and your smile again, and so's Mossgray; and now, I'll gang my ways, and see that Jen's minding the breakfast."

"Lilias," said Helen, when the old woman was out of hearing, "I don't need to have any foolish pride with you. *I* will make

these things for you if you will take me for your sempstress."

"*You*, Helen," said Lilias, "you don't need—you don't wish—I mean—"

"I mean that we have never been rich, Lilias," said Helen, with her shifting blush, "and that now there is occasion for a little more work than usual—that is all; and you need not look so grave, unless you think I shall not make these new-fashioned things well enough to please Mrs. Mense; but I am not afraid, Lilias—I think you may trust me."

"But, Helen, you have too much to do already; you cannot work always," said Lilias. "Let me speak to Mossgray—let me—"

"Hush, hush," said Helen, "you forget that we have some pride still. I have not too much to do, Lilias; people seldom have, I think, and it is no great matter when

one can get through one's troubles by a little additional labour. It is no hardship; this is my kind of fighting, you know, and I can do it very well. I think you will give me your work, Lilias, and a great deal of praise when it is done. I shall please Mrs. Mense. I will invent frills. I think you must trust me."

It was a slight trial to the sensitive, proud Helen; her cheek was flushed a little, and the smile trembled on her lip, but she talked the uncomfortable feeling away, and got it over, with less pain than she could have thought. The great web of linen was committed to her hands, and while Lilias entered into her revival of happy life, calm, peaceful and at rest, Helen went away home to the little, quiet, dull house, and to her labour, the long, hard toil to which her heart rose, as to the strenuous oar which might keep the little ship afloat.

The autumn days flushed to their brightest and began to wane. It was a gay autumn to the Fendies, and to the other youthful people of the neighbourhood through them; Halbert Graeme had quite forgiven Menie Monikie. The saucy Menie sent him cards and gloves when she became Mrs. Keith, and a barbarous lump of bride-cake; but the gift, cruel as it was, did by no means disturb the equanimity of Halbert. The broken gold coin lay snug in a corner of his dressing-case; he laughed merrily to himself sometimes when his eye fell upon it, and thought with a great deal of good-humour, and scarcely any pique, how simple and foolish the boy and girl were, who broke that coin in the pleasent twilight of the Aberdeenshire glen. Halbert had got over his first romance very comfortably; the youthful epidemic fell lightly on the heir of Mossgray.

He was much "out." Alick Fendie and the redoubtable Captain Hyde engrossed a great deal of Halbert's time, and his hands were full of flirtations now when he had no restraint upon him. But Halbert was not like his father; the flirtations were honest, unsophisticated amusements, and did little harm. He was born to be popular with all, but he killed nobody.

And left thus to themselves in the quiet house of Mossgray, it was a pleasant time to Lilias and her guardian. She had learned to prize the sunshine more from its temporary withdrawal, and the old man spoke to her of the wanderer far away as of an absent son. "When he comes home." Lilias remembered how that word rung in her own ear, when she first saw Mossgray; she remembered how, after the lifetime of wandering, the blessedness of those who dwell among their own people fell upon her; and *he* too was to come "home."

Another letter came from him in those clear September days; it was brief, like the other. He had much to tell her, he said, but was still feeble, and must defer it until he spoke to her, face to face; and in another month he would reach Mossgray.

The news brought a strange thrill over the calm Lily. It was years now since he went to India. Their engagement had been formed when they were both very young, and she was now matured into grave womanhood. She began to fancy that she was changed; she began to wonder whether he too had grown old as she had done; and while she smiled at herself for these fancies, they sometimes agitated her a little—a very little—only just enough to keep the balance even, and prevent an overpoise of joy.

And Helen Buchanan now could only snatch a momentary glance from the little wicket gate, of the evening sun, as he went

down beyond the hill, and could not linger to watch the golden mist fade into graver purple before the breath of night. She had no leisure now for sunset walks, no time to glean and gather in to her heart the glories of the grand sky, and the dimmer tints of earth, and eating angel's bread, grow strong. Long labour through the whole bright day, labour at the sunsetting, labour in the fair, dim hours beyond; it was a hard life.

"I have seen the boatmen cross the Firth, when the tawny waves were coming in like lions," said Helen, as she bent over those weary breadths of linen, "and the wind was so high that the boat could bear no sail, and the current so strong that they could scarcely row; but there was something in their work—I fancy I must call it excitement—which made it quite a different thing from safe, monotonous labour.

I mind how it moved me—the dipping of the oars, which scarcely could enter the great, buoyant swell of water, the forcing forward of the boat, which did not seem to be *in* the stream at all, but *on* it; it makes one's heart beat. I thought I should rather have been with Willie Thomson then, than when the Firth was as smooth as the wan water."

"You are not so brave as you think, Helen," said her mother smiling. "Willie Thomson would have found you a very timid passenger."

"Perhaps—if he was prosaic and understood me literally," said Helen, "but I mean one's heart rises; and in our poor little concerns, mother, I think we are in the boat, and the Firth is wild with his lion's mane, and we are at the oars. Never mind the wind—I like it now, when I am used to the rocking—and those great, surly, bellowing

waves—let us tame them, mother, it is what they were made for; and yonder is the shore!"

Mrs. Buchanan shook her head. This hand-to-hand struggle with the meagre strength of poverty was new to Helen. At their best time they had very little—so little that it was almost a marvel how the good, careful mother kept the boat afloat; but then their wants bore proportion to their means, and they were as much content with their spare living as if it had been the richest;—solitary women always have inexpensive households—and never before had there been such urgent need as now. It was well and happy that the young heart rose to meet it; the elder one had old experiences—memories of being worsted in the battle—of failing heart and sinking courage, and the armed man, Want, victorious over all. She sighed and was silent when her daughter spoke; but

the storm roused the strength of Helen. It was the trumpet of her natural warfare, and she bent to her oar with a stout heart; the end was attainable—they saw the shore.

"Father," said Hope Oswald on one of those mellow September days, "Saunders Delvie is not well—will you come and see him."

Mr. Oswald hesitated a good deal; he had not much power of expression, and though he might show his sympathy practically if it was much excited, he could not manage to speak about it. In his capacity as elder, he could administer reproof with very becoming solemnity and overawe the scorner with the grave dignity of his office; but to encourage, to soothe, to console —these were out of Mr. Oswald's way—he was shy of adventuring upon them.

"Father," said Hope, "when Saunders

heard that Peter was dead he came to you—he wanted *you* to advise him and not Mossgray; and now when there is no good word about poor Peter, will you not come and see Saunders, father? for they say he will break his heart and die."

"People do not die of broken hearts," said Mr. Oswald hastily.

"But I think Saunders has broken his heart even if he does not die," said Hope, with reverence, "and I think that is harder than if God had taken him away like Peter; but father, Robbie Carlyle says that he heard Saunders at his worship on Saturday night, and he *minded* Peter. Father, Saunders minded Peter in his prayer as if he were not dead."

Mr. Oswald shook his head.

"I am afraid there is very little chance of that, Hope."

But Hope reiterated her prayer.

"Will you come with me to see Saunders, father?"

"Wait till the evening, Hope," said the banker: "I will go then."

And Hope, when the evening came, would suffer no evasion of the promise. Mr. Oswald permitted himself to be led away somewhat reluctantly, for he felt the duty a very difficult and painful one.

The door of Saunders Delvie's cottage was closed when they came up, and from it issued the voice of psalms. It was earlier than the usual carefully-observed hour of worship, but Saunders and his wife were both weary and sick at heart, and they were glad to shut out the world and its gay daylight, and to seek the merciful oblivion of rest as soon as they could.

The cottage was dimly lighted by the fire, and through the window the quick eyes of Hope discerned the two well-known figures

seated on either side, and mingling their old cracked, trembling voices in the psalm. It was strange music—the wife's low, murmuring, crooning tones, and the deeper voice of the old man with that shrill break in it —more pathetic than any sweeter woe of music. Old, poor, bereaved and solitary, they omitted no night their usual "exercise"—they never forgot, with these sinking, wearied hearts, and broken tones of theirs, to praise the God who chastised them.

The banker and his daughter stood without, waiting till their worship ended; the low, grave murmur of Saunders' voice as he read the chosen chapter, came to them indistinctly through the gloom, and then Hope saw the two old solitary people kneel down to prayer.

They could hear what he said then—all the familiar petitions—the daily prayers in which the godly peasant, ever since he first

knelt down at his own fire-side, had remembered before God, his church, his country, and the authorities ordained in each—had their place first in the old man's evening supplications; and last of all, with his voice then, shriller and more broken than ever, and his hard, withered, toil-worn hands convulsively strained together, there came the soul and essence of the old man's prayer: "If he is yet within the land of the living, and the place of hope; if he is still on praying ground;" terrible anguish of entreaty over which that "if" threw its doubt and gloom.

Mr. Oswald turned away his face from the quick scrutiny of Hope; the one vehement strong man understood the other, but the banker felt himself abashed and humiliated before the intenser, sublimer, and less selfish spirit: "People do not die of broken hearts." The young ladies and the young gentlemen

rarely do; but George Oswald discovered, in the stillness of his own awed soul that night, how solemn a thing a broken heart is, and how the strongest might die of that rending, or more terrible, might live.

Bye and bye they entered. The old man was sitting in a homely elbow chair covered with blue and white checked linen. The bed which occupied one end of the room was decently curtained with the same material. The house was only a but and a ben; an outer and an inner apartment, but everything in it was very neatly arranged and clean. Poor Mrs. Delvie's "redding up" was done very mechanically now; her hands went about it, while her mind was far otherwise occupied, but still the kitchen was "redd up."

She sat in another elbow chair opposite her husband. She was a sensible kindly good housemother, and would have been noticeable in any other connexion, but the

fervent, strong, passionate old man threw his gentler wife into the shade; and even her sufferings for the lost son, whose name through all these weary months she could mention under her own roof, only in her prayers, were dimmed in presence of the intense and terrible love of the father. She looked very old and tremulous as she sat there shaking in her chair, and wiping her withered cheek with her apron. Saunders also had some heavy moisture veiling the almost fierce light that burned in his eye, and the old man trembled too with the wild earnestness of his passionate appeal to God.

Mr. Oswald entered with a shy enquiry after Saunders' health.

"Weel eneuch, weel eneuch—better than I deserve," said Saunders, rising with a haste which showed still more visibly how his gaunt sinewy frame shook with his emotion. The

visit was greatly esteemed and felt an honour, though Saunders scarcely thought it right after concluding the day in his Master's presence, as he had just done, to enter again into intercourse with men; they shut out the outer world when they closed their cottage door reverently upon the waning daylight, and laid the Book upon the table; but the old man rose to offer the banker his chair.

Mr. Oswald sat down upon a high stool near the table, and Hope got a low one, and drew it in to the hearth, where she could look up with those young fearless eyes, whose boldness was not intrusion, to the old man's face. The banker was embarassed; he desired to sympathize, but felt himself an intruder.

"I hear you have been ill, Saunders," he said.

"Na, no to ca' ill," said Saunders clearing his voice with an effort, "I'm an auld man,

and I get frail; but I hae muckle mair than I deserve; a hantle mair than I deserve —mair than I wad hae gien to ony ane that did evil in *my* sight."

"Oh, Saunders, man!" It was the only remonstrance his wife ever made.

"And I'm no ill," continued Saunders, with the spasmodic shrillness in his voice. "I'm strong in my bodily health, Mr. Oswald, its no that: I gaed to ye ance when my heart was turning—ye ken it's no that."

To no other man would Saunders have said so much, but he thought better of the rigid banker than he deserved. He thought him possessed of his own stern unselfish nature, without his miseries to bring out its harsher points.

"Oh, Maister Oswald," said the wife, "say something till him! speak to the auld man; bid him no be sae hard on himsel."

"Whisht, Marget," said the old man labouring to steady himself, "haud your peace—it's you that disna ken. What would it become me to be but hard on mysel? wasna I hard on ane—ane—" the spasm returned, the voice became hoarse and thick, and then broke out peremptorily shrill and high, "ane that canna ken now how I hae warstled for him, yearned for him—oh, woman, ye dinna ken!"

And the mother drew back into the darkness and hid her face; she too had yearned and travailed—but before this agony she was still.

"And gin we win up yonder where we hae nae right to win," continued the unsteady broken, excited voice, "and seek for him amang the blessed, and find him never—will ye say I hae nae wyte o't? Me that avenged his sin upon him, and shut him out o' my heart wi' a vow? The Lord mightna have

saved him; it might have pleased the Lord no to have saved him; wha can faddom the Almighty? but *I* banished him away, I pat him out of sound and sight o' the word that saves, and isna the burden mine? Marget, I bid ye haud your peace—ye hae nae guilt o' his bluid—but for me—"

The old man's head shook with a palsied vehement motion, the wild fire shot out in gleams from under his heavy eyebrows; the hard hand with its knotted sinews distinct upon it was clenched in bitter pain.

The banker sat beside him, awed, embarrassed, incapable; the small motives—the little endeavours of his own worldly existence, shrank away ashamed and convicted of meanness, in this presence. He could not act as comforter—he felt a moral inability to speak at all—to presume to intrude his own indifferent feelings, before this stern avenging wrath of Love.

And Hope sat looking up with her fearless, reverent, youthful eyes into the old man's harshly agitated face. She laid her soft girlish hand upon those swollen veins of his.

"Saunders, I think he is not dead."

The young face was quite clear, brave, undoubting—the girl's heart in which the first breath of the rising woman, and the sympathies of childhood still met and blended, could tread in awe, but without fear, where the worldly man dared not enter. Peter Delvie's mother threw her apron over her head and wept aloud; and after a convulsive struggle to restrain them, one or two heavy tears ran down the cheek of Saunders.

"Na, na, ye dinna ken—ye're but a bairn—he's mine, and I canna hope."

Oh, secret, hoarded, precious hope, to which the wrung heart clung with such passionate tenacity! He could not bear that a stranger's eye should glance upon it.

He whispered it never in any ear but God's. His wife the mother of the lost knew it not except as she heard it in his daily prayer; and he denied it. Jealous of this spark of light which still was in his heart, he denied it rather than make its presence known; and yet—the light leaped up in its socket—the precious germ quickened and moved within him. He could not resist the quivering thrill, almost of expectation, with which he heard those words—the softening tears that followed them.

"Saunders, God let the prodigal come back that his father might forgive him. I think He will let Peter come back to hear that you will be friends with him now. There was a gentleman—Miss Maxwell knows him at Mossgray—and they sent home word that he was dead; but he was not dead—he is coming home—and I think, Saunders, that Peter did not die."

"Is't true—bairn, bairn, are ye sure it's true?" cried Peter Delvie's mother, "is he coming hame—is he living that was ca'ed dead? Wha telled ye it was true? If it happened wi' ane it micht happen wi' twa—and my laddie! my ain bairn!"

"It is quite true, for Helen Buchanan told me," said Hope.

The old man trembled strangely. He held his head supported in his hands and was silent. It was the mother who spoke now; the secret treasure of hope in the old man's vehement breast would not bear the light.

"And she's true and aefauld, but she's wiser than the like o' you," said the mother through her tears, "I see what she meant now; but she wadna tell me this, for fear I did hope, and my hope was vain. Oh, wha kens—wha kens but the Lord? but if it happened to ane, it might happen to twa, and His mercy has nae measure. It

wadna be merciful to send him to his grave wi' his faither's wrath upon him."

The old man's harsh, stern voice was broken at every word, by the convulsive sob which he could not restrain.

"Haud your peace, Marget; say ony ill o' me; but if He slew your dearest ten times ower, dinna daur to malign the Lord."

When they left these old, agitated, sorrowful people, alone with their grief and their hope, the banker did not venture to reprove his child for her want of wisdom. His own mind was full. This youthful faith and boldness—this clear up-looking to the heavens—rash as it might be, and inconsistent with worldly prudence, was a higher wisdom than his. He felt that the girl at his side had met in her simplicity, difficulties with which he dared not measure his strength—that the grand, sublime, ori-

ginal emotions were fitter for the handling of the child than for the man. It made him humble and it made him proud; for the fearless girl's voice of Hope speaking to the desolate had touched him to the heart.

"Should I not have said it, father," said Hope after a considerable silence, "Do you think it was wrong."

"I cannot tell, Hope," said the subdued strong man, "it may turn out the best and wisest thing. It may—I cannot tell, Hope—you have got beyond the regions of expediency."

He was not able to cope with these things —he confessed it involuntarily.

"Because Helen did not tell them, father," said Hope. "If Helen had thought it was right, she would have told them."

"Does Helen visit them, Hope?"

Hope had forgotten for the moment the antagonism of Helen and her father.

"She goes sometimes—sometimes since poor Peter went away."

"And what does Helen say about Saunders, Hope?"

"I don't know, father, except that she is sorry; but I mind once what Mossgray said. Mossgray said it was a good thing that folk were able to change, and that it was very miserable that Saunders did not change till it was too late—very miserable—that was what Mossgray said; but Mossgray should have told Saunders, father, about the gentleman."

"Mossgray is wise; we are all wiser than you are, Hope," said the banker; "even your Helen. And that was what Mossgray said? too late—he did not change till it was too late?"

Too late—too late to keep the due

honour of a wise father, too late gracefully to approve and sanction the righteous purposes of a good son. Too late! The words rang into his ear as the musical air of night swept by in its waving circles, and the moon rose in a haze mild and silvery. The gentle warmth of change was loosing the chains about his heart.

CHAPTER XII.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So was it when my life began,
So is it now when I am old—
The child is father to the man,
And I would have my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

WORDSWORTH.

THE trees stooped grandly over the wan water in all their autumn wealth of colouring, dropping now and then a fluttering, feeble leaf through the sunshine and the chill air, which already felt the breath of winter. The long, yellow tresses of the ash were

already gone, the glories of the sycamore lay so thick upon the ground that you could scarcely see the damp verdure of the grass underneath for the hundredfold of russet leaves which covered it; the heavy fir obtruded its spectral branches through the thin ranks of its neighbours; the red, dry leaves were stiffening on the oak and the beech; and with the flush of the red October light not quite departed, there had risen the first pallid November day.

"No, Lilias, it is not a melancholy time to me," said Adam Graeme. "I like these changes—I like to see this calm nature harmonized to our humanity; not always bare and stern, not always in the pride of strength and sunshine, but touched with the mortal breath, putting off and putting on the mortal garments. I like the cadence these old leaves make as they pass away. There is the kindred tone in it; an analogy more

minute and perfect than those we talk of in our philosophies."

But Lilias did not answer. She had other thoughts of this perpetual change. The slight, feverish red was flickering again on the cheek of the Lily of Mossgray. Softened down into her grave, calm womanhood, was she the same Lily to whom the wanderer, in yon fair far-away days, plighted his early faith? and he—how had the universal breath swayed him in its varyings? That morning she had received a hurried note from London announcing his arrival; this night they were to meet.

"It is a strange subject this," said Mossgray, with the smile of his gentle musings, "for with all my years, and with all my changes, Lilias, I smile sometimes to see how the old pertinacious self has carried its own features through all. Up there in my study, where I left Bishop

Berkeley this morning, was it yesterday I manufactured bows and arrows and dreamed as I made them? So strange it is to mark how this identity runs through all, how we learn and alter, are experienced, calmed, changed, and yet are perpetually the same."

Gentle philosophies! how soothingly they fell upon the timid, anxious heart beside him.

"But sometimes the change is violent, Mossgray," said Lilias, "tearing up old habits so rudely; and sometimes the whole discipline is altered—the whole life."

She paused. The old tales of that strange eastern life crossed her memory, and she could not continue.

"I think these things only develope this obstinate identity more fully, Lilias," said Mossgray, smiling. "We come through the process after our own individual fashion, and carry the distinct self triumphantly

through every change. I think we must turn back, though, and leave our philosophies if you begin to tremble. Come, we will go home."

They turned towards the house, but Lilias only trembled the more; and the old man, as he looked down upon her pale face, beheld it suddenly flush into brilliant change. She stood still, leaning on him heavily.

"Are you ill? does anything ail you, Lilias?"

"No, no; it is Hew!" said the low, joyous voice; "look, Mossgray, it is Hew!"

And the old man started violently, as he looked up at the young, strong, manlike figure leaping down that hillock, with its rude steps of knotted trees—the happy flushed cheek, the frank simplicity of joy and haste.

"It is Hew!" said Lilias, looking up at the one object which she saw.

Was it Hew Murray, in the flush of his youth and strength again?

Mossgray stepped forward hastily, and grasped the hand of the new comer in silent welcome; and then the old man turned away and left them alone.

Adam Graeme was not changed; his heart beat as strongly against his breast as it had done thirty years ago, when he laboured and yearned for some clue to the fate of Hew Murray. Hew Murray! with what a quickening thrill of tenderness, his old friend turned away from the young rejoicing face, which brought back the image of his youth.

The old man's mind was confused; he did not know what to make of this singular resemblance. "It is Hew!" Was it Hew? Was the romance of the old faithful servant

in their desolate house to have a wonderful fulfilment after all? The good, pure, gentle Hew, loving God and loving man, had his Master indeed given him youth for his inheritance? . Singularly struck and bewildered, and with an unconscious expectation in his mind, Adam Graeme hurried forward towards the house of Murrayshaugh.

The great saugh trees beside it had shed their slender leaves, and were waving their long arms mournfully, with here and there a feeble, yellow cluster at the end of a bough, ready to drop after their fellows into the deep, sombre burn, whose course was almost choked by the multitudes of the fallen. As Mossgray crossed the old, frail, broken, wooden bridge, he heard voices beyond the willow-trees, and saw as he drew nearer two strangers standing together. The old man's heart beat high and loud

with excited and wondering anticipation as they turned towards him.

The lady was very thin and pale, and had silvery white hair smoothed over the patient, thoughtful forehead, in which time and grief had carved emphatic lines. The face was a face to be noted; serene now, it had not always been serene—but the storm had altogether passed from the evening firmament, and light was upon it, pale and calm, like the luminous sky of summer nights when the sun with its warmth of colour, and influence has long since gone down into the sea.

Her companion seemed about her own age; he had the strong framework of an athletic man, but it was not filled up as a strong man's form should have been. You saw, as you looked at him, that he was not strong; that sickness, or privation of the healthful, free air which now he

seemed to breathe in with so much pleasure, had unstrung and weakened the hardy frame of this old man; but his hair was scarcely gray, and his eye glanced from under his broad, brown, sunburnt forehead with the hopeful, cheery light of youth. The sun had not gone down with him. Over the fair world which he looked forth upon, the rich tints of an autumn sunset were throwing their joy abroad; the warm light and brilliant colouring were in his heart.

They looked at each other, the two strangers and the Laird of Mossgray. They were all wondering, all uncertain, all embarrassed, for Adam Graeme had paused before them, and regardless of all formal courtesies they were gazing at each other.

"Can you tell me if this is Murrayshaugh?" said the lady with a faltering unsteady voice.

But that would not do.

"Man, Adam, have you forgotten me?" cried Hew Murray with tears in his eyes; and the two boys who had grown up together beside that pleasant water of Fendie, were grasping each other's hands again.

There needed no other salutation. "Man, Adam!" Through their varied, troubled, far-separated course, the two sworn brothers had carried the generous boyish hearts unchanged—and simple as the lads parted, the old men met. "Man, Adam!" there never were superlative endearing words, which carried a stronger warmth of long, and old affection than Hew Murray's boyish greeting, bursting from the honest, joyous, trembling lip that had not spoken it before for thirty years.

"Where have you come from—where have you been. Hew! Hew, what has become of you all this life-time?" exclaimed Adam Graeme. They were holding each

other's hands — looking into each other's faces—recognizing joyfully the well-remembered youthful features in those subdued ones, over which the mist of age had fallen; but in Hew Murray's eager grasp, and in the happy, gleaming eyes, whose lashes were so wet, the spirit of the youth was living still.

"He will tell you bye and bye, Adam," said the lady. "It is a long story—but have you nothing to say to me?"

And Lucy Murray held out her hands—the soft, white, gentle hands, whose kind touch Adam Graeme remembered so long ago.

"Is it you, Lucy?" said Mossgray. "Are we all real and in the flesh?—is it no dream?"

Hew Murray put his arm through his friend's —far through, as he had been used to do, when they dreamed together over

the old grand poetic city on the breezy Calton.

"Give Lucy your other arm, Adam," said the familiar genial voice, "and we will tell you all our story."

Lucy with the white hair, took Adam's arm.

"Have you never been away?—is it all a dream those thirty years?" cried Adam Graeme.

"Look at me again," said Lucy Murray with a smile. "No—there are things in those thirty years too precious to part with I think you have not seen my son."

"Your son, Lucy?—is it my Lily's Hew?" asked Mossgray.

"Lucy's Hew—our representative," said Hew Murray, "was it not a strange chance, Adam—if we may speak of chances—which brought our boy and I together?"

"I am bewildered, overpowered," said

Mossgray. "Do you forget, Hew, that I know nothing?—that this morning I only clung to the hope that you were living at all as to a fantastic dream—that it is thirty years since I gave up the sober expectation of finding you again?—where have you been?—why have you kept us in this suspense? How is it that we have never heard of you, Hew Murray?"

Hew Murray grasped his friend's arm tightly in his own.

"Did you ever think the fault was mine, Adam?—but who is this?"

The little old woman, the housekeeper of Murrayshaugh, came quickly round the gable of the house. They were standing in front of it—and their voices had startled her.

"Who is it?" Lucy Murray looked at her, with some anxiety. "I think it must be Isabell Brown."

Very suspiciously Eesabell returned the

scrutiny. The dignified, gentle, aged lady with her serene face and silver hair brought some singular thrill of recognition to the old woman. She thought she had seen the face before.

"I thought it was only gangrel folk. If I had kent it was you, Mossgray, I wadna have disturbed you; but maybe the lady and the gentleman wad like to see the hoose."

She looked at them again with a jealous eye; the feeling was instinctive. Isabell did not know why she was suspicious of those friends of Mossgray.

"Do you not know me, Isabell," said the graceful old lady, holding out her hand.

Isabell drew back with a slight curtsey.

"Na—there's few ladies ever came about Murrayshaugh in my time; Miss Lucy had mair maids than me—ye're maybe taking me for my sister."

"There was no one else but Jean, I think, Isabell," said Lucy smiling; "and Jean was not like you. She was as tall as I am, and she had red hair. We gave her blue ribbons on Hew's birthday because they suited her ruddy face—do you mind, Isabell?—and do you not know me now?"

Isabell drew further back—the old woman looked scared, suspicious, afraid.

"Na, I dinna ken ye, Madam," she repeated firmly. "I ken few fremd ladies—I haena been in the way o' them—how should I?"

Lucy smiled: it brightened her face in the calm of its peacefulness into warmer and sunnier life.

"If you do not know me, Isabell, do you know Hew?"

The old woman cast a jealous, angry look upon the sunburnt face of Hew Murray—her tone became abrupt and peevish.

"I'm no to ken wha ye're meaning, Madam—I never saw ye before nor the gentleman neither. I've lived in Murrayshaugh a' my days, but the like o' me wasna to see a' the company; and how should I ken the gentleman?"

The sharp black eyes twinkled through a tear affectionate and angry. The old woman was afraid of these stranger people, afraid of the singularly familiar faces which she thought she had seen in a dream.

"Adam," said Hew Murray, "I think *you* must tell her who we are; or shall I, Lucy? Do you forget how you packed the Murrayshaugh apples for me, Isabell, when I went to India? and the moss you put round them in the basket? I think I have some of it still. But have you really forgotten—did you think, Adam, that any one could ever forget our sister Lucy Murray?"

Trembling and considerably excited Isabell stood on the defensive still.

"I never kent ane of the name but Miss Lucy, and this lady micht be Miss Lucy's mother. Do ye think I dinna ken? Oh, Mossgray! it's no' like you to let folk make a fuil o' an auld lone woman!"

Lucy disengaged herself from Mossgray's arm.

"Come, Isabell, we will let them in. And so you remembered poor Lucy Murray and thought that time had spared her? But I am older than you. I used to have my white roses here. What has become of my roses? But I have something better to show you; my son, Isabell, my young Hew; and now come, we'll let them in."

And Lucy turned along the narrow path to Isabell's back-door; jealously, and

in sullen silence the old woman followed her.

"But, Hew, Hew, where have you been?" repeated the astonished Mossgray, as they waited for the opening of the great door.

"In India, Adam; all this time buried in the depths of India, without having any power or means of letting you know that I lived; but wait, wait till we are all together. You shall hear the whole of my story to-night."

The heavy door swung open. Lucy had opened it, and Isabell, jealous and silent, stood behind.

"Come in; come home, Hew," said Lucy Murray. "Let us enter our father's house in peace and thankfulness as we left it with sorrow."

They entered in silence, and silently the

brother and sister went through the faded, dreary rooms; while the old woman followed them like a shadow.

Last of all they went into "Miss Lucy's parlour." It had no very sad associations for Hew. He remembered only the pleasant boyish evenings spent in it, the sadness of the parting which now, so far away, was softened into a tender memory, making its scene not mournful, only dear; and Hew lifted the window and stepped happily out upon the terrace, while Lucy seated herself on the old high-backed chair at the old work-table, to ponder on the old times. To her the room was full of dim days well remembered—girlish griefs and solitudes, struggles which no one witted of—they seemed to have been dwelling here like so many pale ghosts, waiting for her coming, to remind her of their former selves.

A touch on her sleeve roused Lucy from her reverie. Isabell was looking down earnestly into her silvery, gentle face.

"Leddy—Madam," said the old woman, with a husky voice, "you didna mean you? You wasna saying that you're Miss Lucy?"

"I am Lucy Murray grown old," was the answer, "and that is my brother Hew, Isabell, whom we lost in India. Could you forget Hew? Do you not know Hew, Isabell?"

"And Murrayshaugh?" gasped the old woman.

"My father is dead; he lived until ten years ago, and when he died was a very old man, Isabell, and a gentler one than he used to be. Will you welcome me now?"

Timidly, and still a little jealous, the housekeeper consented to meet with a hasty touch the white hand of the old lady whom she feared; and then Isabell abruptly left the room.

They remained for some time in the same position; Lucy in her old place, thinking of the past, and Hew joyously passing from room to room, pointing out the scene of youthful games and merry-makings. Lilias and the young Hew had speedily followed Mossgray, and now a double introduction, very proudly and joyfully performed, had to take place, for Lucy presented her son to Adam Graeme, and Hew Grant bade his mother welcome her new child. The mother had been afraid somewhat of her son's early choice, and thought, as mothers will, that Lilias had but an indifferent chance of being worthy of her Hew; and Lilias too had slightly trembled for the meeting; but now all the formidable part of it was over, and they were already friends.

All her fears were forgotten; it was almost too much for Mossgray's Lily. Hew did not think her changed; he was not

changed himself; and his mother received her as her own child. Lilias felt her happiness overpower her. She went away to seek for Isabell, who had disappeared, and to realize it all for a moment alone.

Isabell was in the great dining-parlour of Murrayshaugh. She was on her knees in a corner, with her apron flung over her head, and petulant, painful sobs coming from under its cover, like the sobs of a child.

"What ails you, Isabell?" said Lilias, stooping kindly over her.

"Oh, Miss Maxwell, what ails me?" sobbed the old woman, whose innocent romance had perished. "She says she's Miss Lucy—and I canna deny't—I *div* ken the face; but she's an aged woman! She has hair whiter than the like o' me—and she says she's Miss Lucy—Oh, Miss Maxwell, that I should have lived to see this day!"

CHAPTER XIII.

I ran it through, even from my boyish days
To the very moment that he bade me tell it,
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,
* * * * *
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence.

OTHELLO.

ADAM GRAEME and Hew Murray were sitting together in the large, low room in the Tower of Mossgray, which they both knew so well. Bishop Berkeley was still upon the table, but the visitor had no interest in the bishop; neither was he looking at the chymic tools or the instruments of science. He was casting long,

loving glances into the dim corners of the room; the old fishing-rods, the superannuated bows and arrows, the ancient skates, they were all there, those worn-out tokens of the fair youth which was past.

"And now, Hew," said Mossgray, drawing one of those large, heavy, lumbering chairs to the unoccupied side of the hearth, "now, Hew, for this wonderful history. What have you been doing? where have you been?"

Mossgray placed himself in front of the cheerful, glowing fire; on the other side stood the low carved chair, turned mournfully aside as if some one had risen from it newly. Its position had never been changed; it still stood where the pale sunbeams could touch it, but it was turned away from the living fireside circle; for the old occupant could never return to Charlie's chair. Strangely pathetic some-

times are these dumb things about us—mournfully estranged and standing apar it touched the gentle heart of Adam Graeme.

Hew paused to spread his hands over the fire. It was a peat fire, and the glowing intense red, and homelike fragrance warmed the very heart of the exile.

"Well, you heard I was robbed and killed, Adam," said Hew; "and so I was—as near it, at least, as one could be, who is now so blessed as to be at home. Such things, you know, are not unusual in India. I was carrying rich presents. I had not a very sufficient escort, and the chances were all rather, that I should have filled a hidden grave in the desert long ago, than that, even now, I should be beside you again.

"I was very severely wounded. These Affghan fellows do not play at fighting;

but I was not quite dead, as you see, Adam, and I was young. The old, martial Border spirit had excited me, I suppose, for I stood on my defence desperately, until there was nothing left, but the feeblest spark of life.

"Why they did not at once extinguish it, I cannot tell. Perhaps they had pity on me for my youth's sake; at all events, they spared the life, and after a journey which I shudder still to recollect, we reached their head-quarters, and my long captivity began.

"Their chief was a hater of the English, stern and desperate—not by any means the usual type of man to be met with among his countrymen: less treacherous, less supple, and if not less a tyrant, at least more tyrannically wise. Liberty for his subjects he did not at all conceive of, of course, but the wild liberty of despotism, was an instinct

and necessity with our Rajah; he hated foreign domination with an energetic hatred, such as one could not fail to respect, even though one suffered by it.

"The Rajah fancied my services might be of use to him. You will smile when I tell you how, Adam. He thought of the De Boignys, and Skinners, and the native troops they drilled, and despotized, and inspired with the mechanical heroism of mercenary soldiers; and he believed that I could drill his wild followers for him, could teach them the unfaltering British discipline, could form them into mechanical pipe-clayed battalions like their European enemies.

"And I tried to do it, Adam, for at six and twenty one would not choose to die; if I had known perhaps the long probation which awaited me, I might have shrunk and desired the end at once; but this end

is not naturally desired ever, I think—I should still choose to live, I believe, were I placed in the same circumstances again; and I hoped more warmly then.

"I began to be artful like themselves. I intrigued and schemed to have a share in the education of the young chief, and at last I attained my object. Ahmed, the future Rajah—the presumptive heir—I was to have the honour of teaching him my language.

"And I taught him my language, Adam; and Ahmed at the head of his tribe speaks English, which has the fragrance of the Scottish border upon it. I used to smile when I heard him.

"We grew very good friends, my pupil and I. Heathen and stranger as Ahmed is, he was my boy, Adam, and we came to like each other—so much so—" said Hew Murray averting his head a little, "that

if I had not heard of you all at home, and only my place vacant, I scarcely think I should have cared for my new freedom."

There was a pause.

"We had but one book," said Hew, resuming, "my Bible which I had managed to preserve with great difficulty. If I had been teaching the father instead of the son, in that glowing Eastern country, and with that Bible, I could have made a poet of him, Adam!

"But Ahmed was not the stuff to make poets of. He was cowed and humbled in his father's presence—overpowered by a force which he could not understand, and though he grew up a gentle lad—weak folk learn wiles, you know—there was the national policy, the tendency to intrigue and deceit; the defective sense of truth, and honour constantly displaying themselves. I could not hedge my Affghan boy about with the

higher principles, so much more noble and pure than the natural instincts, which yet suit our humanity so well—and I could not give him the savage virtues of his father; but I only clung to him the more, because he perplexed and grieved me."

"A difficult matter," said Mossgray, "and how about religion, Hew."

"Ahmed is not brave," was the answer. "He is a Mussulman still; the intellectual conviction is not strong enough, ever, I fancy, to break the old hereditary chains of the creed in which we are born. But Ahmed is like multitudes of those quick Indian youths in the great cities of our Eastern empire. He knows it all; the wonderful histories of the old time with their grand types and emblems, and the wonderful fulfilment they had. Did any one ever open that little volume, think you, Adam, and rise from it without a secret conviction that this

was true? not my boy—not my Ahmed. The enchantment of the human life in which its Divinity is clothed, charmed the mind of my pupil; for when one knows how men describe God, it quickens one's apprehension of the wonderful difference, when God reveals himself.

"And my boy knows it all, Adam, yet in outward form is an unbeliever still; and other youths by the hundred in Bombay, and Madras, and Calcutta, as they tell me, are like him; knowing the extraordinary intellectual truth, and ready if but the divine spark came, to burst the green withes that hold them, and worship the Saviour of the Gospel under His own free heaven. May it come soon! they are prepared for it, these lads—may the divine impulse come soon! I would fain know that my work has prospered, though I never see Ahmed more."

There was another interval of silence.

The subject impressed them both; but Mossgray had not seen the singular state of society of which his friend spoke, and did not know how those young, quick, intelligent spirits, like the old sacrifices on the altars of the patriarchs, were unconsciously waiting for the fire from heaven, ready to be offered to the Lord.

In a short time Hew resumed:

"This imprisonment and work of mine continued all the father's lifetime. I did what I could to drill his soldiers, and I communicated the Fendie accent to his son; but my captivity was not lightened—and so we went on until that fatal affray which made Ahmed chief of the tribe. The lad liked me, I told you; he felt too, in the consciousness of his new power, the advantage of securing an alliance with those powerful English whom his father hated; and so, in

compassion, he brought his wounded captives back to me.

"I knew none of them, but Hew's face struck me. He was the weakest of all, poor fellow, and some natural instinct drew me to him—and then, Adam—then, after my thirty years entire separation from all that I held dear, fancy what my feelings were, when the stranger told me that *his* name too was Hew, and that he was Lucy Murray's son!

"It was a strange meeting;" Hew Murray wiped away the pleasant moisture which dimmed those happy eyes of his; "and Ahmed had given me my freedom. That wily, politic boy! I wonder if he was getting wearied of his old Dominie after all, or if his reluctance to part with me was real. I wish affection was as blind as they call it, Adam, for I think my eyes, being so solicitous

about him, were only quickened to see his weakness; but I could not have remained. I could not have done him any service even I had remained.

"So I gave him my Bible, Adam, and he gave me jewels and shawls more than I knew what to do with. I was bringing them all home innocently to Lucy," said Hew, with his old frank laugh, "Lucy would have been as magnificent as a Begum had no one interfered, but we got into a mercantile atmosphere before we left India, and so some of Ahmed's pretty things were converted into coined monies. There is enough to make the old house habitable, I think; but I have come home as I went away, Adam. I always thought I should; there has no bilious fortune fallen to my share; only they have given me a pension—and better than the pension—give me your hand, Adam—I am at home."

And the two grey-haired men grasped each other's hands.

Lucy Murray had entered the room unheard. She came forward with her gentle, gliding step, and leaned over the carved back of Charlie's chair, looking at them as they sat together by the fireside.

"What are you doing, boys?" said Lucy with the voice and the smile of her youth. Boys—the young composed grave girl, long ago, had called them by that name. They were both older than she was; but the assumed dignity of the earlier maturing woman sat gracefully on her then, as that smile did now.

"We were talking of that merchant boy of yours, and how he would not let me bring home Ahmed's jewels to his mother, Lucy," said Hew.

"I wonder Hew did not remember the

bride that will soon be," said Lucy. "Adam, I like your Lily; I was a little afraid—may I tell you? a little afraid when I began to guess what the conjunction of her two names pointed to. You look grave, Adam—I should not have said so much?"

"No, Lucy," said Mossgray, "they are dead; how far we might err in our early dreams, let us not question. I forget all that is evil when I look back. Let us lay the errors of their youth beside them in the grave."

Lucy Murray bowed her head silently in acquiescence, and folding her hands over Charlie's chair, pitifully thought of the dead.

The dead who wounded hearts and had no power to heal them—who broke faith, and went away with their treachery in their hearts to the grave; who disenchanted youthful eyes, and darkened lives which were not bright before—evils that the doer

never can atone—alas for them, unhappy! Alas for the false—the cruel—the heart-breakers! The hearts broken will heal; the suffering will pass away like clouds; but woe for those who inflict—woe for the seedmen of sin, whose harvest shall not fail.

"And you, Lucy," said Mossgray. "I must question you, and blame you as I cannot blame Hew. Why have I never heard from you? where have you been?

"We came from France to Orkney," said Lucy; "was not that a change, Adam? and there I have been very glad and very sorrowful. They both lie yonder — my husband and my father, and there my Hew was born. I should have written to you Adam, but I have told you before how long my father lived, and how he retained his old pride; and when he was dead, and James was dead, and Hew away from me, forgive me that I was very listless, very

sad, Adam. I could write to no one but my son."

"Not even to Lilias; when you knew who she was, Lucy?" said Mossgray.

"Not even to Lilias, Adam. I did not know *herself*, and I had some fears, I confess, of Hew's early decision on a matter so important; and when they sent me word that my son was dead, and when I got her simple, touching letter, I was jealous, Adam, that any one should mourn for him but myself. I became selfish as grief does sometimes; I would not believe that any other heart could break as mine did. He was mine—my son. I was jealous of her, Adam, when I thought she claimed a right to share with me, my boy's grave."

"And afterwards?" said Mossgray, smiling. He too seemed in a jealous mood—jealous for his ward and her new position.

"Afterwards I fell into my old indolent listless mood again," said Lucy; "Hew was coming home—the two Hews—it filled all my mind. I went to meet them at London, promising myself that I should atone to Lilias for my neglect, and she accepts my apology. Will not you accept it, Adam? You do not know how listless and powerless one becomes whose life has been so overcast as mine. I think it will be otherwise now—I think it is all past, Adam, and we will travel to the sunsetting together."

CHAPTER XIV.

But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL.

"GANG in bauld, man—put on a guid face and tak the first word o' flyting. What are ye looking sae wae about?—they'll e'en be ower blythe to welcome ye hame."

"Na, na, Robbie, I ken better," said the person whom Robbie Carlyle was exhorting; a tall, thin, sunburnt, young man, who limped a good deal, and looked sickly and weak. "Man, I wad rather face a file o' bagnets, than face my faither and him angry;

and I wad gie a' the Indies gin I had them, if he would just be friends wi' me again."

"Friends wi' ye?—ne'er a fears o' him," said the fisherman. "I'll just tell ye, Peter—if he disna be friends wi' you after a' you've gaen through, and a' he's gaen through himsel, I could maist find it in my heart to pit him in Tam Macqueen's boat the first ill day, and let him set to wi' the Firth, and try which ane'll master the tither—for he's past dealing wi' men."

"Whisht, Robbie, ye dinna ken," said the young man "I'll hear nae mortal speak ill o' my faither; if I could but get a word o' my mother, hidelins—just to see—maybe he's mair merciful noo. He's an auld man—he's winning near heaven. Wha kens—he may be turned to mair mercy."

Their path lay along the side of the Marsh, and they had just rounded the projecting corner, on which the comfortable

farmsteading of Seabraes, with its barns and byres, and hay-stacks, stood, looking on the Firth, with only a swelling bank of close seaside grass between it and the beach. On this green bank, the stakes of the salmon-nets used during the summer, were piled in a rude pyramid, and past it wound a byway to Fendie. They were advancing towards the gate of a field through which the road lay.

A gaunt, high figure stood leaning there, hidden by the hedge. Saunders Delvie had heard that his son lived and was returned, from young Hew Grant who last evening had visited the cottage along with Mossgray to prepare the way for the prodigal; and now, trembling under the cold, bright November sunshine, the father stood waiting for his son.

The proud old man was glad that he had been warned—glad that he had time to

compose the rigid muscles of his face, and that no man could guess how his joy boiled in his veins, and how the passionate heart beat in his breast. He was solemnly dressed in his decent Sabbath suit, and looked almost hysterically calm, though all his endeavours could not put away the look of high, suppressed excitement from his twitching eyebrows and stern-featured face.

"Faither! faither!" cried Peter Delvie as they came suddenly upon him—the old man's efforts at calmness, and his unusual dress, carried fear to the heart of his son: poor Peter lifted his hand imploringly. "I was only a laddie—have pity on me—have pity upon me, faither!'

The grim muscles twitched, and worked about the old man's mouth; the dew hung heavy on his eyelashes.

"Come hame, lad," he said, in a voice husky with the effort which confined his

welcome to those seeming indifferent words. "Come hame, lad, to your mother. What garred ye sleep under a fremd roof this last night, and your ain bed waiting on ye at hame?"

"I thought I had some skill in men," said Robbie Carlyle as he turned back to his cottage, vehemently pulling down his eyelid on pretence that some particle of the innocent wet sand had entered his eye. "I thocht I could see through maist folk, but this ane's beat me. The auld dour whig o' a man! wasna I feared to face him when the word came that the lad was dead? and was I no fleyed for him fenting like the women folk for sake o' the joy? Ne'er a bit o' him —he taks his son hame as canny as I would tak little Sandy out o' a dub. Are ye there again in the saut water, ye wee black dielie? I'll pin ye in the net amang the grilse, and sell ye up in the toun for a fat

flounder, as sure as the next tide—wife! is this bairn to drown itsel, ance for a', the day?"

"I'm sure it's mair your business, Robbie, to keep the laddies out o' mischief than mine," answered Robbie's wife, who was spreading out the large stake nets on long ropes to dry, the season of fishing being now over; "but what hae ye dune wi' Peter? has he gane hame?"

"I gied him in a present to his faither," said the fisherman, lifting the little wet obstreperous Sandy upon his shoulders, "and Saunders took him as quiet as that cuddie taks the thrissles—so a' the splore's dune, Jean, and I maun awa into the toun wi' the flounders; whaur's the creels?"

"Mr. Oswald," said Saunders Delvie solemnly, looking in at the door of the banker's private room, as he passed the bank on his way home. "I hae gotten back my

son; he was dead and is alive again—he was lost and is found—and I've come to offer ye my thanks, Sir, for your guid counsel. The Lord sent grief sae lang as I called His name to witness my wrath against the lad, but now, when I hae learned better, behold the mercy! I'm thankfu' to you, Maister Oswald —I'm an auld man, but I needed to learn —and I'm thankfu' aboon a' to Him that pat words o' guid counsel into your mouth, and garred my heart change—for now I'm taking Peter hame."

The banker fell back in his chair, as Saunders withdrew, looking and feeling very much disconcerted; for *he* had offered no good counsel—had given no advice. The thanks which he did not deserve fell on him with the strength of just reproof. The pen fell from his fingers—the solemn joy and thanksgiving of the stern, old peasant moved him almost as much as his grief had done.

It touched the conscience of the obdurate father of William Oswald.

"And was you killed at the same place as the gentleman, Peter, my man?" said Peter's mother, wiping her eyes, as the first excitement of their meeting subsided. The cottage too was in very solemn order, and the housemother had put on her Sabbath gown. There was a grave significance in these changes.

"Na—I got my wound at anither place, mother," said Peter, "and they pat me in the hospital. It was just when I came out that I heard o' the gentlemen—that they were gaun hame; sae I gaed to Mr. Murray—I minded hearing aboot him being lost lang ago—and tellt him my story, and he engaged me to be his servant. His servant, mother; but I think he paid mair attention to me on the road hame than I could do to him, and said he would speak to my faither.

I wish—I just wish there was onything in the world the like o' me could do—no like to make it up to him, but just to let him see that ane was thankful; but I'm come hame a puir useless object, mother; they say I'll be lame a' my days."

Poor Peter began to look disconsolate again. The idea of being a burden on those for whom he would so gladly have laboured, was very bitter to him.

"Dinna, laddie, dinna," said Saunders Delvie. "I'm strong and hale, the Lord be thanked, though I'm auld; do ye think I winna work for ye baith as blythe, ay, as blythe as the day ye were born—as blythe as I gaed out to my wark, Marget, the first time I heard the bairn greet in this house, and kent the blessing was come? Maistly blyther, woman, for I didna ken the depths them as I do now. What for do ye greet? I

tell ye it behoves us to gie the Lord thanks, and no' tears, for His mercy."

But the tears were the thanks; they hung upon Saunders's own withered cheek as he reproved his wife.

"Nae doubt but we'll fend," said the mother, "nae doubt but we'll be provided for. Wha ever wanted yet that put trust where it should be put? But gang away, Saunders, like a man, and put on your ilka day's claes; I canna help it—it comes into my head ye've been at a funeral when I look at ye, and the like o' thae thochts are no' for this day."

And in this cottage, and in Mossgray the joy of reunion was the same, only perhaps so much the greater here, as the passionate spirit of this old man was more intense and vehement than any other near him, greater alike in its joys and sorrows.

In Mrs. Buchanan's little parlour those long November evenings were less busy now; the dreaded Martinmas came and went; the work was finished and the rent paid.

Six pounds—how small a sum it was—and yet it had swallowed up the whole half-yearly dividend, and the whole produce of their hard labours. Helen began to look discontentedly at her best gown, that long-preserved black silk one, which now that her brown merino was so far gone, must be worn every day, and for which no substitute could be obtained; and Mrs. Buchanan sighed over the thin shawl as she daintily darned the places where it began to give way, and smoothed her daughter's hair tenderly, in an unconscious endeavour to console her. Mrs. Buchanan comforted herself by thinking, that in spite of the old shawl, and the one much-worn gown, her poor Helen looked a gentlewoman still; but the days grew

chill, and other people were wearing cloaks and plaids and furs. Mrs. Buchanan sighed —she could not venture to make any addition to Helen's stock, for the next half-year's rent began to lour upon her gloomily already. How was it to be met?

Helen was a good deal overcast with those cares too, but the clouds never settled down upon her firmament; they came and went, as the ceaseless breezes drove them hither and thither, a hundred times in a day; and between every pang of heart-sickness, between those weary sighings for something happier, which could not choose but fall upon her sometimes, there always intervened bright glimpses of wayward sunshine, stirrings of the young uncontrollable life, the nervous strength and daring of her nature, which rose to meet the struggle when it came, and when it was not present, happily forgot it all.

It was Saturday, the first Saturday for

a long time which she had not spent with Lilias. But Lilias was joyfully engrossed with the strangers, and Helen shyly kept herself apart, and felt a shadow of contrast upon her own sombre, unchanging lot; but just as she began to sink under her natural dimness, an appearance crossed her eyes, which brought out the merry, ringing laugh, and flushed her sky with the sunshine of gay impulse. The appearance was the Reverend Robert Insches escorting a lady—a very young, very bashful, very pretty little lady, who seemed to see a good deal of fascination in the handsome head which bent down to her so graciously. If he was beginning to be cured of the more serious wound, the Reverend Robert was not cured of the mortification. The pretty little girl was a Laird's daughter, by no means disinclined to smile upon the handsome minister. He was escorting her home—the traitor, on a

Saturday! and chose this road out of the remaining anger, and malice aforethought, which still testified the power of Helen, to try if he could not mortify her as she had mortified him.

There never was a more lamentable failure. Mrs. Buchanan upstairs, heard the ringing laugh break the silence, and then the new impulse of mirth made itself a voice. The good mother listened with a smile. Helen was moving about below. Helen was singing, and in another moment the gay voice, and the light foot came upstairs, keeping time with each other in the pleasant caprice of a cheerful heart.

Mrs. Buchanan was working at a particular "fancy work" of her own. She was darning the carpet. The carpet had been new once, but that was so very many years ago, that it was growing aged now, and feeble like other things. There is a pleasure in doing what

one knows one can do well. Mrs. Buchanan had a modest pride in her skill for repairing these dilapidations of time; and the natural delicacy of mind which could not be at ease while there was anything ungraceful or imperfect around it, expressed itself after this homely fashion. She did not patronize finery at all, but the aesthetical feelings were delicately developed in the good mother's mind nevertheless, and there was art in her darned carpet.

"Will you come with me, mother, to the waterside?" said Helen.

"I must have this done: I don't want to begin to it again, my dear," said Mrs. Buchanan, looking up from her work; "and besides, it is very frosty and cold, Helen; wrap yourself up as well as you can, and I will have a cup of tea for you, when you come in again."

So Helen drew the shawl, which fortunately had been of very sober colours in its

far-distant youth, over her merino gown, and tieing on her little straw bonnet with its plain brown ribbon, went down-stairs again, and out into the clear, chill November air. It was rather cold, but bright and exhilarating, and singing snatches of old songs under her breath, Helen went happily down the steps of the bridge till she reached the river-side, far down, towards the waterfoot.

Yonder, quivering under the red, bold, frosty sun, the great Firth thrills through its full veins with the joyous impulse of life. Far away among some quiet clouds, is Skiddaw and his humbler brother, vigilant, far-seeing, watching over "the English side," as it slopes down, in the serene evening atmosphere to the brink of the great waves; and there the winding Fendie water glides into the estuary, and cold at that point looks the round hillock from which the sun has quite withdrawn, while in the west that great bluff hill which

defies Skiddaw, has a glory on him almost too grand to look at, and the range of far-withdrawing hills, of which he is the last and greatest, open away in the distance, with cloudy peaks ascending behind, and clear intervals of sky, like lakes, between.

The air was very quiet, the river drowsy with the frost, the last old patriarchal leaves fluttering down one by one. In shady nooks which the sun had not reached, the morning hoar frost was still white upon the grass. Calmly over the world stole the slow change, clothing the earth like a garment with all its blessed uses in it. Calm over all, the great sun went down unchanging—the wonderful heavens stood constant for ever. Strange harmony—strange contrast; the eternal yonder, stedfast in the skies—the immortal here, born to be swayed, and taught, and changed in right of its humanity—the child of the great heavens.

The clouds were still red in the west, and from the haze of light which the sun left for a moment behind him, the dark stern hill stood boldly out. Helen was about to turn back, carrying more sadly the heart that came hither singing like a bird; for great thoughts were rising in it now, thoughts which breathe only in the graver air, and hush the voice of singing.

"Helen!"

How she started! but slowly, only very slowly, her pride permitted her to turn, to ascertain whence the voice came.

"I have been looking for you up the water," said William Oswald, coming up with a warm eager glow upon his face; "and should have gone back again to your mother disconsolately, had I not caught a glimpse of your shawl."

She looked at it very pleasantly; the venerable, aged friend; it was good for something in this world after all.

"And now, Helen, I have a great deal to say to you."

Helen did not doubt it. There came upon her a slight tremour; this then was to be the final combat, hand to hand. He was resolved to conquer; she saw it in his eye, and for the first time she was afraid.

But at present William Oswald said nothing very warlike; he began to speak of his work in Edinburgh—his book; and Helen in spite of herself was interested. He told her of his prosperity; the rising good name; the modest beginning of fortune; frankly and in full confidence as people speak to those who have a right to know, and an interest in all which concerns the speaker; and Helen turned her head away now and then half afraid of this quiet appropriation—this strange *right* by which he claimed her sympathy.

Other people had been walking that

Saturday afternoon beside the wan water. Far upon the opposite side, Hope Oswald and her father were returning from Fairholm where they had been to make a call—a business call of Mr. Oswald's, in which he had persuaded his favourite to accompany him.

"Do you know where William went, when we came out, Hope?" said the banker.

Hope looked up doubtfully in her father's face; but she hesitated only a moment. "He went to Mrs. Buchanan's, father."

Mr Oswald said nothing. William had only been a few hours at home, but during these had undergone a scrutiny of which he little dreamed. The banker had been prepared to find his son changed, and had prepared himself to be contemptuous; but William was not changed: and the old pertinacity began to tighten its grasp upon his father's heart.

In a quiet link of the water, not very far from Fendie, yet as still and solitary as though it were in the midst of a wilderness, lay a little mossy burying-ground. They are frequent in that Border district; melancholy, green, dewy places, sometimes clustering their tall, grey spectral gravestones about the ruined walls of an ancient chapel, sometimes altogether deserted by the reliques of the old faith—lying alone, by roadsides and in quiet places, disturbed only when grave processions come, to add to the number of the names of those who are dwelling there.

A few fine old trees grew within the enclosure and round it, through a fringe of long bare willow branches you could see the water. Mimic forests of moss covered the trunks of the trees, and minute white fungi specked the green with delicate flowerbells. Hope Oswald had a great admiration of

those lichens—she entered the graveyard to seek some specimens of them—and her father good-humouredly followed her.

The strong man's heart was softened; he was more open to kindly impressions than usual; and as he stood waiting for his favourite child, his eye fell upon a grave. Nothing had happened in his prosperous life to bring him near such solemn dwelling-places as this. He had lost no children; and the memory of father, mother and brethren, had faded out of his heart long ago. He had never seen this humble stone before: "Sacred to the memory of Walter Buchanan;" it moved him like the dead man's voice.

With a hushed and whispering tone, the river passed by upon its way, and the willows rustled on the water with a low lamenting cadence. Amid such sights and sounds as living he would have loved to hear, the gentle man lay dead; where none could ask or give

forgiveness—where none could alter the unjust anger, the evil sternness, the cruel pride which was past. The heart of the rigid man began to beat and tremble, as he remembered the absolute conclusion put to all human doings by that grave. A little time the glad vicissitudes of change should remain for himself—and then—

What life soever he had darkened—what truth dishonoured—what mercy neglected—absolute and stern, the coming death should fix them all unchangeable for ever.

He was a Christian man, despite of all the weakness which lay in his boasted strength. He felt that the secrets of his own heart lay bare before the Eye which judged the dead. Wonderingly Hope Oswald looked into her father's awed and changing face. She dared not venture to say, "This is poor Mr. Buchanan's grave," as, with simple art, she had intended, when she first observed it;

and in silence he took her hand and led her away.

His stronghold was broken down—his worldly wisdom failed him. He had deliberated on all his actions all his life—should he obey the impulse now?

"Hope," said the subdued banker, "why did you speak of Mr. Grant that evening we went to see Saunders Delvie? Do you remember? Why did you say to them that you thought Peter was alive?"

The sensible Hope was perplexed.

"I—I don't know, father," she said with some hesitation. "I just said it because it came into my head."

And the prudent, deliberate, elderly banker felt himself constrained to copy his child.

"Go home now, Hope," said Mr. Oswald as they reached the bridge. "I have something to do; tell your mother I shall not be long." And Mr. Oswald hurried away to say

what had come into his head. The obstinate man felt that it was right, and that he dared not trust himself to consider. Very grand and successful had been Hope's experiment—her father determined to try one of his own.

William Oswald had indeed a great deal to say. They lingered on their walk, Helen and he, till the dusk stole over the sky, blotting out the sunny clouds in the west. He was a good general, this grave resolute William; he skirmished with his restless suspicious adversary, till he got her into the most favourable position for his decisive movement, and then he struck the blow.

But her usual bravery had forsaken Helen; against the strong will which took possession of her now, she could not bring up the buoyant might of resistance which was so available in her usual struggles. She tried it faintly, but the proud heart would only flutter, it would not rise to the warfare; and

so poor Helen, perforce had to listen, and at the critical point of the listening, instead of keeping up the combat as she had hitherto done, could only, by some strange imbecility which she by no means comprehended, say something which ended in "your father."

The moment the words were said, the heart did rise in indignation at its own treachery; but they *were* said, and she was compelled to listen again.

"I have not spoken to my father yet," said William, "but he thinks I have given up this matter, Helen, and he thinks he is very much satisfied."

He had done it now—the enchantment began to relax—the eager heart sprang up in awakened strength, again resolute not to be conquered.

"He thinks I have forgotten," pursued the imperturbable William, "and he thinks he is satisfied; but at the same time, Helen, he

thinks that I am a very pitiful fellow, and that there is no one like you in all Scotland."

They were close to the gate of Mrs. Buchanan's little house. The weaker belligerent visibly started—not at the singular speech alone, but at a sight more singular; for there with his hand upon the wicket gate, awkwardly fumbling about the latch, and looking as shy as ever girl looked, stood the banker Oswald.

He was just parting with Mrs. Buchanan; but Mrs. Buchanan's impetuous daughter had reached the gate before he could open it. The stern banker was very much confused; he looked up awkwardly at the unquiet face with its strange, perplexed wonder—its singular mixture of emotions—pride, anger, pleasure, even—alas, for Helen's dignity—a little fun; for the confusion of the respectable Mr. Oswald had something ludicrous in it.

No one would help him; he appealed to

William with a glance, but the uncompassionating William looked on with secret glee, and offered no assistance. Mr. Oswald was very much confused. He wanted to say something to the purpose, but could not accomplish it; so he said something which was not to the purpose.

"A cold evening, Miss Buchanan."

Miss Buchanan's expectant face was turned full upon him. Her rapid lip moved unconsciously as he said the unmeaning words. She bowed her shy graceful bow, and passed him with the swift nervous motion, which belonged exclusively to herself. The banker looked a little blank; he *did* want to say something, and he was annoyed that he had failed.

"Helen, my dear—Helen," said the good mother with a slight tone of reproof. Helen paused and turned round, within the gate; the slight impatient motion—the embarassed

frank look—Mr. Oswald was pleased that like himself Helen did not know what to say.

"I came to say," said the banker slowly, "that my wife intended—I mean wished, to call to-morrow if your mother would permit her, and that we—that is, I hope we shall see more of each other in future, Miss Buchanan—good-night."

He held out his hand—shyly the small nervous fingers met it. The banker looked dubiously in her face; was it to be peace? but she only said good-night—and Mr. Oswald turned away with a doubtful, pleased smile, too much occupied to notice his son till he stumbled against him, and then suffered the glad silent grasp of William's hand, in token of full and happy reconciliation.

In the little parlour, the tea-tray was on the table, the fire shining brightly, the light—though there was still but one candle—cheerfully filling the homelike room; but Helen

ran upstairs and laughed a little, and shed a few bright tears, and came down exceedingly dignified and proper, endeavouring to persuade herself that she was angry, but certainly shedding no angry radiance round her, out of her shining eyes.

The old kind face in the old corner; the pleasant familiar, son's voice discoursing of old household things which no one else knew as he did. Mrs. Buchanan wondered at herself how she could ever tolerate another—could ever dream that any but he, might be the future son.

CHAPTER XV.

Joy, gentle friends! joy, and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

"Is it to be, Helen?" asked Lilias.

A sudden gravity floated over the lurking laughter in Helen's eye.

"Is what to be, Lilias?"

The Lily of Mossgray was almost gay now. She put her hands on her friend's shoulders, and looked with a smile into her face.

"Because Mossgray particularly desires

to know. He will ask you the question himself if you do not tell me, Helen."

Helen drew away the gentle hands.

"You have told me very little about your new mother, Lilias. Is she indeed the Miss Lucy of Murrayshaugh—Isabell Brown's young lady?"

"My new mother wants to see you, Helen; you must come with me to Mossgray to-day; and Isabell at Murrayshaugh begins to be reconciled to Miss Lucy. She was cured of her unbelief," said Lilias with a happy blush, and smile, "when she saw Hew."

"Is he so like what his uncle was?" said Helen.

"He is very like the picture, and the picture was like his uncle—there is a resemblance still."

"And, Lilias—for yourself," said Helen; "do you stay at home—do you remain here?"

The calm Lilias answered less shyly than her friend asked, though both of them blushed. "We are going out to the wars again—not to India; I do not mean to India—but Hew must go and work, Helen; for all these changes do not make us rich, and Mossgray tells him it is best to climb the brae and conquer the difficulties with his own hand."

The flush deepened on Helen's cheek—the brave stout heart rose; for her too this work remained; and the notes of the reveilée were already in her ear.

"You guessed well once, Helen," said Lilias, "when you prophesied calm griefs for me; but now that the terror and the pain are overpast—now, Helen—what do you promise me now?"

"Good times," said the young prophet, raising her stooping head, "fair calm sunshine, pleasant skies—and so many to help and comfort you, Lilias; sometimes sorrows

—quiet ones—righteous people going away hopefully to the other country—but not war; for you will dwell among your own people."

"Not always," said Lilias, with her quiet smile; "not at first certainly; and for you, Helen?"

"For me!"

She looked away into the vacant air, her eyes absorbed with fairy visions; not of ease or wealth, or rank—those things so far away and unknown in which she saw no charm; but the loud heart beat high in her breast, and the colour went and came on her cheek, like the rapid breath which seemed to sway it; the hill to climb, the dangers to conquer!

With a sudden start she broke the spell of her musing:

> "He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
> But aye a heart aboon them a'."

she said half aloud, and tears bright and pleasant, were in her eyes.

This was the lot which she saw rising in its unknown glory before her, the undiscovered country full of grand perils and deliverances—the storms to be borne, the griefs which the joys—the labours. The bright calm suited her friend was not made for her; it was she who was going to the wars.

"And am I to have a lilac satin frock, Mamma?" demanded Hope Oswald.

Mrs. Oswald had just returned from the promised visit which completed the reconciliation. There was something painful in it, and in the renewal of the old friendship which had been so long and forcibly restrained. Few people, even though they are happy people, can look back upon the past without sadness, and grave thoughts were in the mind of the banker's gentle wife.

"You will get whatever is proper, Hope, my dear," said Mrs. Oswald.

But Hope was very far from satisfied. "Whatever was proper" might not include the lilac satin frock, on which Hope had set her heart; so she left her mother, who was singularly silent and preoccupied, to discourse to the banker upon the marriage of Mrs. Fendie's eldest daughter, the Reverend Mrs. Heavieleigh, and the dress in which Adelaide made her public appearance as bridesmaid on that solemn occasion. Mr. Oswald was more propitious than his wife.

"You shall have your lilac satin frock, Hope," said the banker, joyously rubbing his hands, "and anything else you like, for there's not a Fendie of them all like either of you. You shall have your frock; and do you want anything else, Hope?"

It was a considerable trial to Hope's self-control. There were, indeed, various other

things which she should have liked; for instance, Adelaide Fendie had just got a pair of resplendent bracelets; but Hope restrained herself.

"Thank you, father, no — unless *you* wanted me to get something else."

The banker laughed, and made a private memorandum. Hope's modest subjection to the paternal wishes did her no harm.

But the times were by no means ripe for the appearance of Hope's magnificent official dress. She had to console herself with expectations and wait.

The new year came and passed with its festivities. The strangers settled down in Murrayshaugh; already the old rooms there had grown less dreary, more home-like—but the jealous Isabell, who suspiciously watched every new article of furniture introduced into them, had not much reason to complain. Nothing out of place disturbed the aspect of those familiar rooms. The old state parlour

which had never been used within the memory of man, was to be refurnished, to do honour to "the young folk;" but the son and daughter of Murrayshaugh were content with their old apartments. A little less meagre than they were, the antique, grave, sombre rooms were little changed.

And when again the spring began to be spoken of by the softening breeze, preparations were made at Murrayshaugh and Mossgray, and under the roof of the banker Oswald. The young Hew Grant had been in Liverpool, where his business was. He was now coming home, and home too came William Oswald, who had taken a house in Edinburgh, and had been furnishing it, after the modest fashion which suited his means, with great enjoyment of the unusual business.

There had been a farewell party in Helen Buchanan's school-room—a very large party, comprising the various ranks of girls, who

had finished, or had not finished, their education under her. Some of them were sturdy young women, only a few months younger than Helen's own strangely differing self—some of them very little merry fairies, not reaching her knee, but all undoubtedly owned her sway, and recognised in this enchanted circle no authority so high as "the Mistress." Hope Oswald was Helen's aide-de-camp, and assisted on this, as on other occasions, and enjoyed the party greatly; and when the host of ruddy visitors were gone, Helen Buchanan left the school-room, with grave thoughts and a dim face, not to enter it again.

"I have got my lilac satin frock, Helen," said Hope sedately, the next morning, as she hung over Helen's work-table.

Helen did not answer. She smiled—a momentary smile fading immediately into gravity. She herself was making a dress of white muslin, which was nearly finished; a very

simple dress—the last proud assertion of Helen's independence.

The banker was greatly inclined to make a favourite of her now; he was proud of the new daughter who, having conquered and fascinated himself, was, certain as he felt, to subjugate all the world. There were strange contradictions in this obstinate rigid man. His son and his son's fame did not affect him at all in the same way as these two girls did. Helen and Hope—Mr. Oswald fancied there were not two like them in Scotland.

And about Helen's bridal dress; a very fine one lay in Mrs. Oswald's room, waiting until after the momentous ceremony, because the proud Helen would not accept it now. The banker cast a wondering half-disconsolate glance sometimes at its glossy uncut breadths, and thought it would have been a very appropriate bridal dress, and as much richer than Charlotte Fendie's as the bride was more graceful; but here, in the little

parlour sat Helen, making the plain, white muslin one which her own means could reach.

"Will you let me help you, Helen?" said Hope.

"No," answered Helen quickly, "it is nearly finished now—I do not need help—but who is that coming in?"

"Oh, Helen, it's Miss Insches!" exclaimed Hope, struck with momentary alarm. She almost feared the minister was about to rush in, and carry off the prize after all.

Helen laid her work away, and took some other less likely to excite attention. The minister's little good-humoured sister came bustling in.

"I hardly expect to be long in Fendie, now, Mrs. Buchanan," said Miss Insches significantly.

But Helen's mother was resolved not to be curious—she only said "Indeed."

"Ye see," said Miss Insches, "it's no to be expected but what a young man like

Robert should think of settling; though I aye tell him it's his best way to take his time and look weel about him, for a minister's wife, ye ken, Mrs. Buchanan, is no like a common body's; and when a lad like Robert is well likit in a place, he has great reason to be canny—for a wife that wasna just richt, would spoil a'."

Mrs. Buchanan looked a little piqued—but Helen's face was lighted up, and she was inclined to be very merry.

"You are quite right, Miss Insches," said Helen.

The good little woman looked at her in some surprise, but Helen's eyes were cast down, and she could not see the laughter which danced under their lids.

"Ay, Miss Buchanan, it's a serious thing," resumed Miss Insches, "for ye see, a minister maunna think about his ain comfort it's lane, but about what a'body'll say; for it's a wonderful thing to me, how a'body *does* aye

find something to say, whatever folk do; and then forbye being a *lady*—and I aye make a point o' that—there's so much needed in a minister's wife. There's Robert now—he's as guid a lad as ever was; but when he's at his studies, or when he's dune out wi' preaching, I'm aye as quiet as poussie—but it's no every wife that would have that discrimination."

"No, indeed," echoed the mischievous Helen.

"And then Robert, puir man, he's aye been used to have his ain way," said Miss Insches, becoming disconsolate as the thought again entered her mind that Robert must consent to come down from his shrine, and very probably should have his own way no longer: "and I'm sure I dinna ken onybody that deserves't as weel; for a better lad—"

"Is Mr. Insches going to be married?" interrupted Hope.

Miss Insches brightened.

"Weel, I'll no say—there *is* a young lady, I ken—she's very bonnie, though she's but a young thing, and they have an unco wark with one another. Ye ken he maun make up his mind for himsel—I wouldna take it upon me to advise him to the like o' that; but I judge he would get nae discouragement yonder, and she's a lady baith by the faither's side and the mother's. There's nae saying what may come to pass in a while; but the noo, Robert's gaun away to take a jaunt to himsel—he's just worn out aye at his duty, puir man, and he's gaun to London."

"Weel," added Miss Insches to herself as she left Mrs. Buchanan's door. "If she ever got the offer of our Robert—maybe she didna—but if she ever did, I kenna what glamour was in the lassie's e'en, to make her take that muckle dour man when she might have gotten the minister!"

A little mirth, somewhat strange to look upon, was in Mrs. Buchanan's parlour when the

minister's sister left; for Helen laughed, and her laugh had a quivering sound, and tears were in her eyes; and Hope laughed because Helen did, and in triumph, with some perception that there were deeper feelings than mirth in those tears, and Mrs. Buchanan smoothed her slightly ruffled brow and smiled with them, thinking of the time when "Robert," was great and important in her eyes, as well as in those of his sister, as of a troublous, uneasy time, already far away and hidden in the past.

The white dress was completed: they laid its spotless folds on the old sofa where the spring sunshine fell on it gently, and Hope Oswald laid two or three of those small fragrant, deep-blue violets which grew at the door, upon the bridal dress. Pure, simple, hopeful, marking the conclusion of the chequered youth, which spent in toil and poverty, had yet been bright with the sunshine of heaven. Tenderly Hope Oswald decked it

with her violets—gravely the mother looked on; this gentle grasp of joy brought a strange note of sadness out of the young heart and the old, sadness which made them more joyful, and showed that the happiness had reached the depths, and stirred the stillest waters there.

And in her little room alone, Helen Buchanan paused at this new starting-point of life, to look upon its mercies which were past, its difficulties which were before her: and with tears upon her cheek, rendered the thanks, and sought the strength, which she owed and needed. A new beginning: to be loftier, purer, braver than it had ever been; and upon the great Ideal which she sought to reach, the light streamed full down from the skies. For it was not an ideal, but a resemblance; the human features of that wondrous Man, who has carried our nature to the throne of Heaven, and wears his universal crown upon a human brow.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Now draws he to the west, and noble clouds
Near to his royal person all the day
Attend him to his chamber. In his eye,
His broad, full, fearless eye, no faint or chill
Is visible; grandly and solemnly
As who hath well done work which shall remain,
He marches to his rest.
Lift up thy gorgeous curtains, thou great sky!
That he may enter in. Fall back, oh, clouds!
Where now he goeth, he must go alone."

"I DID not think," wrote Adam Graeme as he took up the narrative he had concluded long ago, "that I should ever add more to this record; but strange things have happened with me, since in this quiet study of mine, I recorded my resolutions

here. My resolutions! I find no trace of them anywhere, except on this page which already begins to grow yellow, and fade into the guise of old age like its human neighbours. They are gone, like the winter ice into the bosom of our wan water, pleasantly melted under the sunshine, into the stream which gave them birth.

"For yonder, with the light mercifully shining on it, stands Charlie's chair; and beside me on this table, are the first lilies of May, with dew upon their snowy leaves. They remind me of my child; not of the dead only, who long ago trod down the early blossoms of my life into the dust, but of the living Lilias, who is mine, not to be lost to me by any change. She has gone away from my old house now, with her bridegroom, but she is still my child. They blend together in my mind, the mother and the daughter, and in memory and in presence they cling

to me, where neither jealousy nor fear can interpose, always my own.

"And through the open turret window yonder, I hear the sound of a frank, bold voice; my heir, the manful and stout representative of the old Graemes. He is not like me, and it is well; his honest, joyous, youthful strength will raise up the decaying race. I cannot give my thoughts to Halbert —I cannot bequeath to him my old faculty of dreams—nor would I, if I could. Some one whom I know not, will inherit from me this contemplative life. I would not give it, if I had the power, with all its sadnesses and glooms, to Halbert; he has the lands, the old honour, the good name. I am glad that I leave them to him pure, and that he is true and honest, and has not the spirit of his father. His father—who can tell? the greater mysteries of truth might open to him dying, who, living,

heeded them not; but we do not speak of Charlie Graeme. Humbly in awe and silence we leave him in the great Hand which has taken him away: ourselves having pity on the dead.

"For Hew and Lucy are with me again, gray-haired people in their father's house; and Lucy's son and my Lilias are our common hope. The three of us have had diverse lots, parted in far distant places, exposed to strange fortunes; but we end as we began, with kindred aims and kindred fancies, and travel together towards the one conclusion of mortal life which is the same to all.

"Hew's troubles have been those of captivity and exile. To his warm heart which always has answered so tenderly to voices of kindred and friendship, a very hard and bitter form of the inevitable discipline; but he has borne it bravely, and the frank,

simple, guileless spirit has come unaltered through all. When we wander together by our waterside, when I feel Hew's arm diving through mine as it used to do, thirty years ago, when I hear his unchanged voice addressing me, "Man, Adam!" I close my eyes and thank God. We are young again; the intervening time floats on the air about us, a dream which we have dreamed together, and the enthusiast lads who leaned over yonder wall upon the dim hill-side, looking out dreamily over the royal city, are here, on the banks of the home river, as hopeful, as undoubting, and scarcely wiser than when they parted.

"Heavy wisdoms that come with years, dark experiences that close men's hearts, let us be thankful that they have not fallen on us—that we are as we were; carrying young hearts with us, into the purer country.

"Lucy has had sorrows other than

these. Long patience, the silent burden of slow years and quietness such as only women bear; tending the weakness of the stern old man who lived so long in his solitary pride, and after some year or two of tranquil gladness—no longer, I think—weeping the tears of a widow. We reverence her calmer peace, as we reverenced her youthful gravity long ago, when we were boys, and when the budding woman called us so, and was gentle to us in her young wisdom. It is true her hair is white as the leaves of my lilies, and that her cheek is colourless, and has something of the ashy hue of age; but Lucy, like Hew, is unchanged. Graver, wiser, more serious still than we are, smiling the old gentle composed smile at our boyish fancies, speaking the old words of quiet counsel, directing us in the old calm playful fashion. Isabel at Murrayshaugh, simple, kind heart,

wept for the broken romance, the fair, lost Miss Lucy: but I, who knew her better than Isabel cannot think thus, for she is still Lucy Murray, the same as she ever was.

"It is some time since we married our children. He is a good youth this Hew of ours, worthy of his mother and of my Lily. My good Lily! I miss her, now that she has left me, perhaps more than if all her time of dwelling here had been happy. I remember the long sad days in which my poor child parted with all her hopes, almost with regret. It seems to me sometimes that there was a blessing in this grief.

"I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Great hope, and glorious, which speaks of another country—grand as it is, it does not fill up all the requirements of this humanity. To live, we must

have some hope for the mortal life, some expectation warm with the human blood. It is only men who divorce and separate the two—the wonderful grace of Heaven gives us both.

"They are to come to us when the autumn comes, and it is coming apace. I agree with them that it is right—that Hew while he is young is doing well to work what work he can, and provide for days of home-dwelling; but I feel that the absence of Lilias makes a great void, and I may innocently wish that this needful work was done, and that we might keep them here beside us.

The other youthful people have begun their course pleasantly; fair fall this sunny power of change: I felt that Mr. Oswald's resolution must come to an untimely end, like mine, and it is very well that he has yielded gracefully, before it was too late.

"The changed and the unchanged, how they blend and mingle. We are here again, we three, in these old houses, by this wan water; scarcely a tree has fallen, scarcely an acre of those far-spreading banks has been altered since we were here in our youth, and in our youth, our most cherished fancy was to return and meet thus again. Thus, nay, not thus; other dreams were in each heart of us. We thought of others joining us here, in the time of which we smiled to speak, when we should be old. We thought of prosperous lives, of names grown famous, of households and of heirs; but one by one, the old hopes have gone down to the grave of such, and only the oldest of all survives. We are here, we are together, but not as we dreamed.

"Solitary, aged people, alone but not sad; for now we speak of One, of whom then we spoke not ever, of Him who has been with

us through all this length of way, the One known when all were strangers, the One present when all forsook us. We speak of Him in His tenderness so near to us, a man touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and we speak of Him in awe and love, as God over all, blessed for ever. A little time and we shall enter His presence, hopeful to be like Him, seeing Him as He is; and while we remain in this fair earthly country, we speak of the heavenly which is to come. Another country—perhaps indeed, this familiar world with its change and fiery ordeal past; and again I say I love to think it will be so. I love to anticipate the time when I may watch and wait *yonder* for that sublime morning which shall restore to me my human frame, my human dwelling-place; and when I look upon this water, my faithful, long companion, I think I see it flowing on under the sunshine of a grand and

holy prime, for which these ages of tumult and anguish and misery have but ripened and prepared this world.

"And while we remain here, human gladnesses abound about us, and hold us fast in their silken chains. We are much together; we live abroad under the free heaven, my brother Hew and I, and in the evening we call out Lucy to see the sun go down.

"Bravely going down in light and hope to the other world which waits for him; and thus we travel in peace and happily, on towards the west which comes nearer every day—on to the setting sun!"

THE END.

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